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First Italian edition: 1982

First Italian Araba Fenice edition: 1998

Tenth printing Italian edition: 2007

Photocomposition: Tre Punti Grafici snc - Cuneo - Italy

We wish to thank Mia Farone Rosso for updating the section on wines. Special thanks goes to Sue Style for so generously giving her time and expertise in helping edit the recipes.

ISBN 978-88-86771-93-1

Beppe Lodi
Luciano De Giacomo

NONNA GENIA

photography by Aldo Agnelli

with a brief catalogue of wines by
Roberto Macaluso

Edited by Roberta Corradin
Translated from Italian by Antonia Schlueter

ARABA FENICE



EUGENIA DE MARCHI
1864 - 1950

Contents

Preface by the Publisher	7
<i>A Portrait of Luciano De Giacomi</i> by Carlo Petrini	9
<i>Nonna Genia: The Value of Tradition</i> by Laura Maioglio	13
<i>Nonna Genia as Seen by an Italian Food Writer in 2007</i> by Roberta Corradin	15
<i>The Cuisine of the Langhe: Emotions and Seasons</i> by Beppe Lodi	19
<i>My Land, Myself</i> by Luciano De Giacomi	35
<i>Memories of Nonna Genia</i> by Antonio De Giacomi	37
<i>One Hundred Recipes of Alba and the Langhe</i> collected and researched by Beppe Lodi and Luciano De Giacomi	41
<i>A Brief Catalogue of 18 Langhe Wines</i> by Roberto Macaluso	173
<i>Man, Animals, Land, Food</i> photographs by Aldo Agnelli	203
<i>Nonna Genia's Recipes as Seen by the "Stelle del Piemonte"</i>	221
<i>Nonna Genia Yesterday, Stelle del Piemonte Today: The Gastronomic Tradition of the Langhe as the Heart of Today's Piedmontese Cuisine</i> by Franco Bergamino	225
<i>The Recipes of the "Stelle del Piemonte"</i>	229
<i>Glossary of Piemontese Terms</i>	271
English-Italian Index	275
Italian-English Index	279

Celebrating 25 years of Nonna Genia

The history of *Nonna Genia's Classic Langhe Cookbook* begins long before the publication of its first edition in 1982. Nonna Genia, born Eugenia De Marchi (1864-1950), was the grandmother of Luciano De Giacomi, founder of the *Ordine dei Cavalieri del Tartufo e dei Vini d'Alba* [The Order of the Cavaliers of the Truffle and Wines of Alba]. De Giacomi, together with the chemist, journalist and psychologist Beppe Lodi, researched and collected the 100 recipes of Alba and the Langhe which are the body of the original cookbook. They decided to honour the memory of Nonna Genia by naming the book for her.

The first edition of *Nonna Genia* was published by *Famija Albeisa*, an association dedicated to promoting the local culture of Alba. It had the identical recipes it has today, along with an eloquent and informative discussion by Beppe Lodi on the Langhe's gastronomic history and on the psychological bonds with food and cooking. Though it quickly sold out, it was subsequently more or less forgotten until we decided to retrieve it from oblivion in 1998. To our first Italian edition we added comments to the single recipes by Luciano De Giacomi; these were drawn from the almanacs of the *Ordine dei Cavalieri del Tartufo e dei Vini d'Alba*. This edition also included photographs by the esteemed Alba photographer Aldo Agnelli, whose images record the lifestyle of the Langhe in the 1950s.

Since the publication of our first Italian edition, Nonna Genia has become a perennial favourite; the Italian edition is now in its tenth printing. Thanks to the kindness of Beppe Lodi and Antonio De Giacomi (Luciano De Giacomi's son) we also published the German edition in 2001, and we are proud to celebrate the first

25 years of Nonna Genia with this English edition. Here we have included a final section featuring the recipes of today's top Piedmontese chefs, the "*Stelle del Piemonte*" [Stars of the Piedmont].

Lastly, occasionally non-native speakers of Italian ask us if the name *Genia* has anything to do with the Italian noun *genio* [genius], perhaps being the feminine form. However, there is no feminine form of that noun. While it is true that Luciano De Giacomi's grandmother was indeed a genius in the kitchen, *Genia* is simply the diminutive of *Eugenia*.

We hope that English-speaking readers visiting the region will appreciate, through this new, enriched edition, the best of the Piedmontese culinary tradition, both past and present: always healthy and delicious, following in Nonna Genia's footsteps.

Alessandro Dutto
Fabrizio Dutto
Araba Fenice Publishing
Boves, Italy
September 2007

A Portrait of Luciano De Giacomi

By Carlo Petrini

Recently I was paging through *Nonna Genia*, the classic book of Langhe recipes by Beppe Lodi and Luciano De Giacomi. This collection, republished in 1998 by Araba Fenice, remains the most complete and exhaustive cookbook on the cuisine of the Langhe area. Though De Giacomi was fundamentally important in laying the groundwork for the culinary preservation of the Langhe (Nonna Genia was his paternal grandmother), many have wasted no time in forgetting him, as so often happens today.

In the late 1960s De Giacomi visited Burgundy and was profoundly affected by two groups: the *Clos De Vougeot* and the *Chevaliers Du Tastevin*, associations concerned with the preservation of local culinary traditions. He returned home determined to form a similar society aimed at the gastronomy of the Langhe. So it was that in 1967 the *Ordine dei Cavalieri del Tartufo e dei Vini d'Alba* was founded, of which he was the *Gran Maestro*. In the same period he became the driving force behind the restoration of the Castello di Grinzane Cavour, a splendid 14th century manor. In the mid-1800s it was the residence of Count Camillo Benso di Cavour, one of the main architects of the unification of Italy. The castle was subsequently named for its most illustrious inhabitant and ultimately became the headquarters of De Giacomi's newly formed Order.

Over the next 30 years regular convivial meetings (called *Capitoli*, or Chapters) were held at the castle; these were instrumental for projects such as the opening in Grinzane of the public winery (the first in the area) as well as the rediscovery and publication of numerous invaluable historical, oenological, and

gastronomical texts. I'd like to note here the monumental work of Andrea Bacci, who in the 1500s had codified all the oenological information of the Italian peninsula into five immense tomes. Under the auspices of De Giacomo's Order these were translated from Latin into modern Italian by Dr. Mariano Corino of Alba and thus made available to numerous wine connoisseurs. Equally important was the publication of the 19th century viticulture monograph by Lorenzo Fantino, which was the first example of formal zoning of local vineyards by type. Also of note were the letters from Count Cavour to the overseer of his estates, excellent artefacts of how politicians of long ago were expert at managing their properties.

Luciano De Giacomo's tireless dedication and resulting accomplishments of almost unimaginable value were the product of a man who was euphemistically referred to as *burbero* [a curmudgeon]. Stern with others but above all with himself, he was not one to mince words or waste time with chatty niceties. He managed to alienate all manner of winemakers, journalists, fellow citizens and high-ranking politicians. From 19th century bourgeois traditions he inherited trappings, *physique du rôle* and rituals. But the difference between De Giacomo and his counterparts in Burgundy was that he placed such great importance on the gastronomic traditions of his area. The late 1960's saw a boom in industry and consequently in local wealth for northern Italy. It was the era when people from Torino began to make day trips to the countryside (the Langhe) to experience great food in the old country tradition. Yet at that time local wine production was still greatly underdeveloped from the commercial standpoint, amounting to little more than a cottage industry.

Today I think of what an El Dorado the Langhe region has become, where everybody has jumped on board to get a piece of the tourism pie: tour operators run associations with improbable names like "Master of Wine" (which is much more Anglo-Saxon than Italian), while others invent unconvincing Langhe menus. It

makes me think of the first time I met that grouch at the beginning of my career, through the great winemaker Angelo Gaja. I was genuinely awestruck as we were introduced, yet De Giacomo's stony comment to Gaja (in perfect Alba dialect) was "*L'ei nen piasì a cumuslu*" that is, "I can't say I've had the pleasure of meeting him." A few years later, after the first Slow Food Convention on wines of the Piedmont region, I received a certificate of recognition as a Friend of the *Ordine dei Cavalieri del Tartufo e dei Vini d'Alba*. Subsequently I met De Giacomo at the *Trattoria Antica Torre* in Barbaresco and a brief though deep friendship was forged. Unfortunately in 1995 the Gran Maestro passed away, without knowing how far adrift today's culinary quality has truly gone. It would be terribly wrong for us to forget Luciano De Giacomo: whoever would strive today to know the Langhe would do well to read his books and know the story of this good man with a rough exterior.

Carlo Petrini is the founder and International President of Slow Food. He was born in Bra, near Alba. After receiving a degree in sociology from the University of Trento, he began his career in cultural events planning and journalism. He founded Slow Food in 1986 and in 2004 organized *Terra Madre*, the biannual world meeting of farmers and food producers. He is the author of several books.

Nonna Genia: The Value of Tradition

By Laura Maioglio

Reading *Nonna Genia* was like reliving my childhood when, as soon as school was out, we would embark on the first transatlantic crossing from New York to Italy where we would settle down for the summer in our ancestral home in Fubine Monferrato in Piedmont, in north-western Italy. There, under the watchful eye of my parents, our locally recruited cook would prepare those dishes native to our area. Most of what she cooked is to be found in *Nonna Genia* because it mattered little that we were in the Monferrato area and not the Langhe. With few exceptions and small variations, the recipes in *Nonna Genia* are shared by all of Piedmont.

Back in New York it was the familiar fare of Piedmont which we would continue to dine on – both at home and in my father’s restaurant, Barbeta, that he had opened in 1906 and which recently under my tenure celebrated its one hundredth anniversary.

Nonna Genia took me on a sentimental journey stretching from Piedmont to New York; as I turned its pages, marvelling at how much was familiar, I came to understand its greater significance. At first, *Nonna Genia* may appear to be nothing more than the laconic annotations and diary of the day-to-day cooking of a gentle grandmother. But therein lays its enormous importance. It is a rare record of the original cooking of the Langhe and Piedmont unnuanced by modern interpretation. Its recipes remain in their pristine state, their authentic patina undisturbed by contemporary retouching, except for the occasional translator’s note. As such, it is a priceless historic document for the culinary historian, for the scholar of Piedmontese cuisine, and for the professional delving into the past for inspiration.

I return to Piedmont and visit the Langhe numerous times a year. Many of the dishes in *Nonna Genia* are no longer to be found in the great and superb restaurants of the Langhe and other parts of Piedmont. The cooking of the Langhe and Piedmont has been “*ingentilita*” (refined), as they say in Italian. The influence of nouvelle cuisine with its pursuit of elegance, beauty of presentation and lightness of preparation has transformed Piedmontese *cooking* into an exhilarating Piedmontese *cuisine*. But as the original dishes have been refined, they have inevitably been changed. Those that could not conform to the new style have often been abandoned altogether.

A book like *Nonna Genia* renews our respect for tradition. In the culinary world tradition is not accorded the same respect it enjoys in the other arts. We have great museums proudly showcasing their masterpieces from every era of human endeavour, acclaimed orchestras performing classical music throughout the world and collectors avidly competing for old masters, thereby driving up their value.

But in the culinary world, value is placed not so much on tradition as on the new. Today’s culinary culture has adopted the mentality of the fashion world, where “tradition” is almost an embarrassing word.

Nonna Genia should do much to re-establish the value of tradition in gastronomy. Because dishes, unlike works of art, can only be preserved through their recipes, and *Nonna Genia* becomes an enduring repository for a culture’s culinary heritage.

Ultimately, *Nonna Genia* is not about moving back into the past or moving forward into the future, but about moving the heart with the memories of the tastes of another time.

Laura Maioglio is the owner of Barbetta Restaurant in New York City, the oldest Piedmontese Restaurant in New York and one of the very few “*Locali Storici d’Italia*” [Italian Historic Landmarks] outside of Italy to be so-recognized by the Italian government.

Nonna Genia as Seen by an Italian Food Writer in 2007

By Roberta Corradin

There are books you translate just because they pay you, and there are books you translate because you feel you are doing something important, because you are helping ideas to find new readers. Working on the translation of *Nonna Genia* with Antonia Schlueter was far more than merely translating its recipes (which already would be not bad at all: recipes *are* ideas!). This is because *Nonna Genia* is far more than just a cookbook.

This is the book many authorities, such as Carlo Petrini, founder of Slow Food, consider to be “The Bible of Piedmontese Cooking”. Indeed, *Nonna Genia’s Classic Langhe Cookbook* can easily be considered a historical document of the gastronomy of the Langhe hills – the same hills where, several decades after *Nonna Genia’s* times, Slow Food was born. And after reading this book, you will see that this is not simply a coincidence and that *Nonna Genia’s* recipes and mood share a common philosophy with today’s Slow Food tenets.

As an Italian and Piedmontese food writer, I highly recommend reading *Nonna Genia* not just as a book of recipes. There is much more here! Try to read them all, before choosing the dishes you want to make. Along with all the recipes you can still cook nowadays, such as the true *vitello tonnato* – no mayonnaise involved! – as well as memorable *agnolotti al sugo di arrosto*, *panna cotta*, *torta di nocciole*, and many others, you will find recipes which remain a testament to country life in Piedmont in the first part of the twentieth century. In *Nonna Genia’s* times, the rhythms of the year were understood through the work in the fields. Look at the recipes which use all the parts of the pig: I am

sure that many non-Italians will think that the Piedmontese of 100 years ago were practically barbarians. In fact, many modern Italian and even natives of the Piedmont region would never choose to prepare such dishes as *Lasagne al sangue*, *Batsoà*, and *Orìon*. Consider for example those recipes which use so many organs of cow, such as *Finanziera*: one must realize that in Nonna Genia's day, people were not concerned about problems like Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy. While today bovine offal may not be safe to eat in some countries today, the Piedmontese breed is still fed and cared for using traditionally methods, and receives meticulous medical care; it is completely safe for human consumption. So if you find *Finanziera* on the menu of a restaurant in Piedmont, or if you want to buy your organ meats from a Piedmontese butcher to prepare your own *Finanziera*, do not hesitate: it is safe.

The initial idea for the English language edition was to create a special section of "historic recipes" which are no longer prepared at home. We then decided to leave them in their original places in the book as they appear in the Italian version in order to respect the rhythm of the book and of the rural life it tells about.

A technical note: for Italian readers and authors, recipes are ideas which don't need to be too precise. In the original Italian text, you find "butter" and "oil" among the ingredients, but the recipes at times do not indicate the quantities, since everybody in our country knows by heart how much is needed, according to his or her personal taste. Similarly, the Italian edition of Nonna Genia says "put it in a hot oven", without being precise about temperatures. Well, there is a reason: at one time everyone used wood ovens, and there was no thermometer inside! So, dishes were baked at approximate temperatures relying on instinct and experience to tell when something was "done". This is an approach that *Nonna Genia's Classic Langhe Cookbook* shares with other important texts of Italian gastronomy: *La scienza in cucina* by Pellegrino Artusi, *Il Talismano della felicità* by Ada Boni, and *La*

cucina regionale italiana by Anna Gosetti della Salda (only the last one occasionally gives tips on oven temperatures).

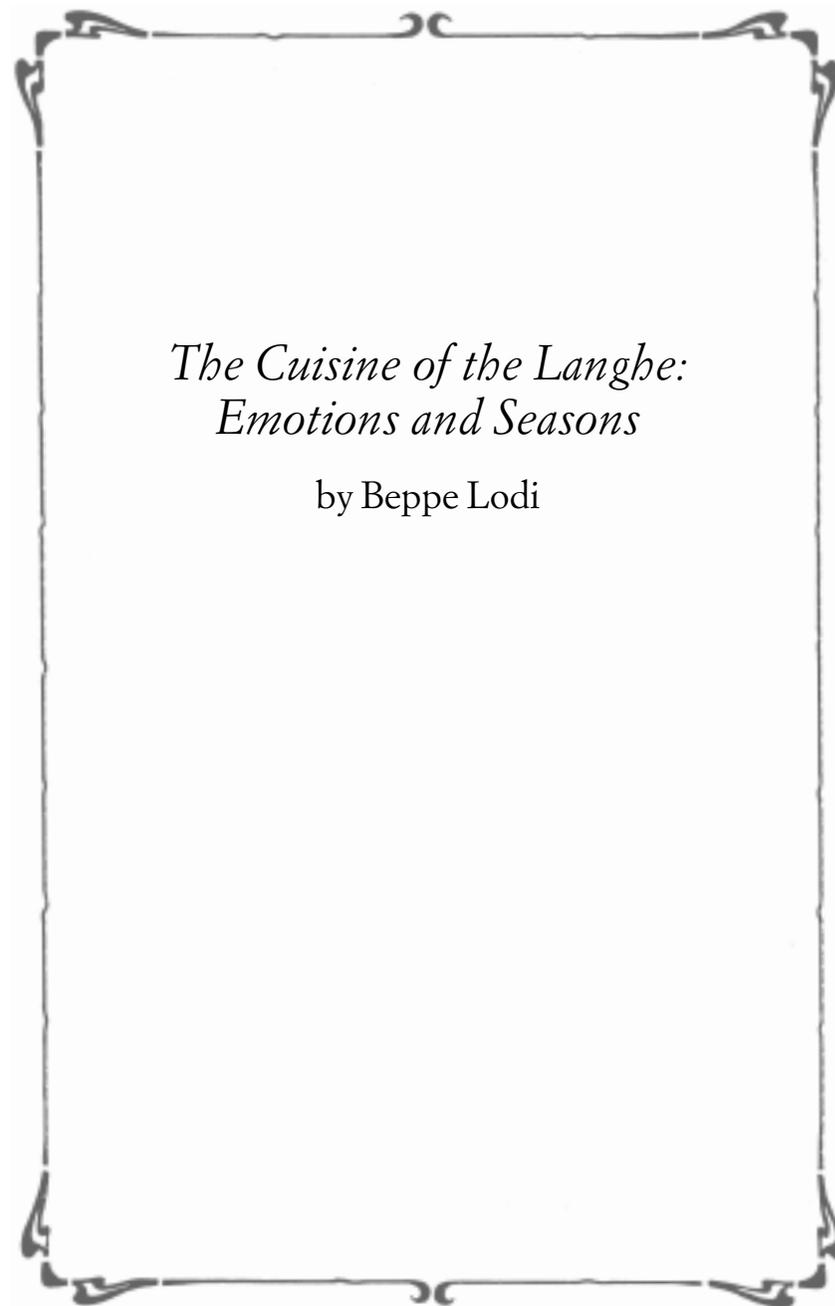
Translating the recipes here, we endeavoured to give precise quantities and temperatures in an attempt to put non-Italians at ease when re-creating dishes they know and love already, though they may not be familiar with Piedmontese cooking but have eaten in Piedmontese restaurants. In addition, the reader will find a new section at the end of this edition, in which the chefs "*Stelle del Piemonte*" give their interpretations of some of Nonna Genia's classic recipes: a way of paying homage to the fact that Nonna Genia herself was the chef of a restaurant, and that Piedmontese culinary tradition continues with the present generation of her professional "grandchildren".

One final note about ingredients: geography plays a prominent role. The only oil used in Piedmont during Nonna Genia's times was extra-virgin olive oil from Liguria, which has a mild and delicate flavour. It was even used for deep-frying – but of course, feel free to fry food in the healthiest oil you choose. Butter, if there is any doubt, is always unsalted. We do not salt butter in Piedmont: if we want a salty flavour with our butter we accompany it with anchovies, always from Liguria, the nearest sea region. *Lardo* can be another issue for foreign readers: the easiest one to find outside of Italy is perhaps the Tuscan *lardo di Colonnata*. This will work fine, even if in Piedmont we use a locally made version or that made in nearby Valle d'Aosta. Also, *salame cotto* has nothing to do with the cotto salami found in some supermarkets outside of Italy; if you can't find it, substitute it with the same amount of Italian *prosciutto cotto* [cooked ham]. Hazelnuts should be the variety indicated as "*nocciola gentile delle Langhe*", and honey should be organic acacia honey.

I know, you're wondering: "will I have to travel to Piedmont, to the Alba market in the Langhe hills, to buy my gastronomically correct ingredients?" Well, possibly this is asking too much. Yet, this could be the welcome excuse to go to Italy and experience the

incredibly pleasant languor that the Piedmontese still dedicate to food and wine, cooking and winemaking, and to eating and drinking. Meanwhile, let *Nonna Genia's Classic Langhe Cookbook* help you start enjoying it in your own kitchen.

Roberta Corradin, food writer, fiction writer, and translator, was born in Susa, in the Piedmont region of Italy. She is based in Rome and writes for several Italian and international publications including *L'Espresso*, *Il Sole 24 Ore's* magazines, *Il Giornale*, *Illywords*, and *Food Arts*. Her next book is about female cooks and is due to be published by Einaudi in 2008.



The Langhe: an Expanse of Serenity and a Unique Traditional Cuisine

Giuseppe (“Beppe”) A. Lodi was born in Turin into an established Piedmontese family (his ancestors include Francesco Lodi, the mayor of Turin in 1599). His father Umberto was the last in the family to practice the art of glass-making. Originally trained as a chemist, later in life he decided to study psychoanalysis, earning his degree in Turin in 1981. His thesis was on the psychological and relational implications of the cuisine of the Langhe. He enjoyed a notable career (1973-2004) as a public administrator for the city of Torino as well as working as a writer. Together with other scholars he has published numerous works, among them *Memorie di Pietra* [Memories in Stone] (about tombstones and memorial plaques in Turin); *Archivi di Pietra* [Archives in Stone] (the history and art of older churches in Turin); *Cittadini di Pietra* [Citizens in Stone] (the history of Turin told through monuments to its renowned citizens). He collaborated on the book *Tavole eccellenti* [Excellent Tables] edited by Franco Maria Ricci. His most recent book, published in 2006 is *Di pietra in pietra* [Stone by Stone], historic and artistic memoirs of the medieval stone streets from Torino to Sestriere. In addition, he was a delegate from the Piedmont region to the *Commanderie des Cordons Bleus de France* and a member of the *Accademia Italiana della Cucina* [Italian Cuisine Academy], not to mention a member of the *Ordine dei Cavalieri del Tartufo e dei Vini d’Alba* [The Order of the Cavaliers of the Truffle and Wines of Alba]. He has always been greatly interested in the psychological and relational implications of food and cuisine.

Editor’s note: Beppe Lodi’s text originally appeared in 1982 in the very first edition of *Nonna Genia* as published by Famija Albeisa, accompanied by the book’s recipes. Here we have included excerpts of that text in digest form, in order to better help orient the reader with the remainder of the book. We are grateful to the author for his kind permission to abridge his original text for inclusion in this volume. Taken out of the context of *Nonna Genia*, it would stand on its own; used here as an introduction it is a superb backdrop and preparation to other parts of the book.

The rolling hills of the Langhe push from the south of the Piedmont towards the Padana plains, as if they would like to curl up and sleep there. A perimeter of approximately 200 kilometres surrounds a land where nature is lively yet tempered: it is a glorious celebration of colour, light and traditions without being imposing or aggressive. Even the borders of the Langhe are determined by nature’s spontaneity: in the east there is the Bormida di Spigno River, running from Cairo Montenotte up to Bistagno; in the west the Tanaro River, starting from Ceva and going north to Neive. The northern border is formed by following the Tinella Stream from Neive to Canelli and then continuing on to Bistagno, while the southern part of the area is defined by connecting Ceva to Millesimo and proceeding to Cairo Montenotte.

With an average altitude of 630 metres (approximately 2,000 feet) above sea level, this region is made up of three main hilly crests with dozens of spurs branching out like so many fish bones or sinuous tongues. It is perhaps from these geographic features that the name derives: the root *lang* [long] provides the image of an endless chain of hills. Another theory is taken from a local expression “*andar per Langa*” [to stroll about the Langhe]¹, referring to the paths which follow the tops of the hills. These are

¹ Translator’s note: In the Piedmontese dialect, and sometimes also in Italian, the word Langhe (referring to the geographical hilly region) can have a singular form, Langa, which is more literary than literal, such as in the expression “*andar per Langa*”. This phrase conveys a sense of enjoying a walk among the hills without having a true final destination; in effect, wandering.

punctuated here and there by castles, towers and chapels which are surrounded by little villages. Taking in the breathtaking panoramic view from one hill to another one cannot help but marvel at the delicateness of this land.

The landscapes and settled areas, all evocative of an elegant past, meld in great silence in the peace of a world that is not part of the Alps but is not quite the seaside either; and yet the sharp otherworldly beauty of the former and the crystalline atmosphere of the latter are preserved. The Langhe area is often swept by the sirocco and the *tramontana* winds which are both considered brothers to the fields and woods despite their different origins. In the local dialect the wind from the sea (sirocco) is called “*marin*” while that from mountains (*tramontana*) is “*arsura*”. Landscapes, winds, men and women seem to be sculpted from time, as if they were protagonists from a fable.

A person who “*va in Langa*” [strolls the Langa] becomes a part of it and a part of nature. The little tavern, the glass of wine offered at a farm while a dog barks in the yard, the *salame* and anchovies enjoyed on a stone table in the shade of a fig tree – these are all part of its magic.

In effect the cuisine of the Langhe has a magical aspect to it. Here, more than in other places, popular wisdom found a way to defeat challenge defeat poverty with genius, passion and a love of what nature offers. As the Great Maestro Luciano De Giacomi once said: “Any cuisine, and ours specifically, is born poor but clever. The necessity to utilize everything sharpens the wits. Think of all those squires and their castles. On every *bric* [hilltop] there is a castle. When the squires butchered a pig they gave the poor folk the blood and offal. And these people created *Lasagne al sangue* [Blood Lasagne]², and they used the pig’s ear and jaw to make

² Translator’s note: the recipe for *Lasagne al sangue* (Lasagne with Sweetbreads, Sausage Meat and Rosemary) is on page 80.

*Oriòn*³, and the various organs became the base for dishes like *Frisse*⁴, and with the addition of juniper berries *Grive della Langa*⁵ – all of which are wonderful dishes”.

Visiting the Langhe one discovers the history of its cuisine. Farmers transported wine up to Valle D’Aosta and returned with *fontina* cheese which then was ennobled in the marriage with the Alba truffle. In this way *Fonduta*⁶ reached its highest expression of delicacy. Other farmers travelled the salt route – Alba to Bossolasco, then onto Millesimo and finally Savona – and brought back salt, anchovies, and olive oil. All of these, when combined with garlic, produced *Bagna caoda*⁷. “It is simple farmhouse fare from the 1600s”, says De Giacomi, “which was refined and enriched in the 1800s.”

The origins of the Langhe cuisine (and indeed Piedmontese cuisine on the whole) are cause for much discussion. First and foremost there is the age old diatribe that Piedmontese cuisine is derived from that of the French. “That simply is not true” declares Felice Cunsolo⁸, who then goes on to explain that though there are indeed dishes of the Alpine area in Piedmont and the French Savoy region which have identical names, ingredients, and techniques, it must be remembered that “this is because of the contiguity of the region, the common language and the fact that the Savoy dynasty straddled the Alps, ruling (and therefore uniting) Piedmont and Savoy for 800 years”. The two cuisines came together for the first

³ Translator’s note: the recipe for *Oriòn* (Pig’s Head) is on page 141.

⁴ Translator’s note: the recipe for *Frisse* (Mixed Pork Bundles) is on page 94.

⁵ Translator’s note: the recipe for *Grive della Langa* (Mock Stuffed “Grive”) is on page 92.

⁶ Translator’s note: the recipe for *Fonduta* is on page 110.

⁷ Translator’s note: the recipe for *Bagna Caoda* is on page 102.

⁸ Translator’s note: Felice Cunsolo is the author of several publications, including *Dizionario del gourmet* (Novedit, Milano, 1961) and *La cucina del Piemonte* (Novedit, Milano, 1969).

time in 1046 with the marriage of Countess Adelaide, marchioness of Susa, to Odone of Savoy. Cunsolo confirms that obviously there was a continuous exchange of dishes from that point onwards, but maintains that exhaustive, picky research into the origins of specific dishes or sauces is an effort as dishonest as it is useless. He concludes that anyone who insists that Piedmontese cuisine is merely a derivative of the French, apart from being historically and gastronomically ignorant, “has been fooled by the linguistic similarities without digging further”.

It would be, in fact, difficult to conclude that despite geographical vicinity and some similarities between customs, Piedmontese cuisine is a subspecies of French cuisine. The latter adheres to a strict, refined style and the dishes are complicated and ostentatious, pleasing the eye before the palate sometimes with a detrimental effect. On the other hand, Piedmontese cuisine is simple and tasty, and its flavours stand out. This is because of the deliciousness of the ingredients and the sincere, uncomplicated way in which they are transformed.

The misunderstanding may have its origins in the fact that in the past, French food was the prevalent cuisine found in the more prominent hotels, wealthier households and to a certain extent the royal court in the city of Torino – just as the French language was in use there for a time. It was, however, only a passing fancy which did not really influence the local culinary style on the whole. The only tangible repercussion was in the cookbooks which appeared up until the end of the 19th century, many of which were undeniably and copiously Frenchified. An example is “*Cuoco Piemontese*”, published in 1815, which does not actually have anything Piedmontese and in fact is merely a collection of French recipes translated into sort of Italo-Gallic slang. The result is a confusing, inelegant and almost silly mix of terms and names which do not benefit anyone and would sound almost comic to the modern reader. The alleged influence of French cuisine on that of Piedmont, in the end does not really exist, because even where

similarities are found they have more to do with geographic happenstance than true derivation.

The Happiness of Sharing Food with Good Friends and Guests: a Slice of *Salame* for *Merenda Sinòira*⁹

When the classic Piedmontese recipes first appeared, when *merende sinòire* were commonplace, when *salami* and *Acciughe al verde*¹⁰ livened up the tables of the poor, there was no time for scholarly debates on the correctly or incorrectly assumed French roots of Piedmontese cuisine. One worked and stopped only when there was a visitor. And regardless of what time of day it was, *salame* and bread were put on the table, along with a bottle of good wine – ‘*na bota del pi bon, cula’ d l’ass* [a bottle of the best of the family’s private reserve] – able to hold its own against the strongly flavoured *salame*. *Salame* always figured in the array of dishes offered at a *merenda sinòira*, though it is useless to give a recipe for it in this book as it is too difficult nowadays to prepare it at home. There are plenty of other dishes that are quite easy to make and save from oblivion.

If today’s *salami* for the most part are not homemade, they are still at any rate a starting point for anyone wishing to discover the

⁹ Translator’s note: The *merenda sinòira* is a classic Piedmontese meal served in the latter part of the afternoon and at which enough food is eaten, amidst pleasant chatting, to make it more or less dinner. It can be as informal as nibbling on odds and ends with friends who drop by unexpectedly, to quite an elaborately planned event perhaps in honour of some special occasion. It is a delightful way to catch up with friends and relatives in winter when the days are short or in the summer out in the garden.

¹⁰ Translator’s note: the recipe for *Acciughe al verde* [Anchovies in Green Sauce] is on page 44.

Langhe cuisine. From the little *cacciatorino* (with or without garlic, so that it is either more pungent and assertive or more delicate, respectively) to *cotechini*, from *salame cotto* made with pork rind to *salame crudo* which is stuffed into natural casings, and on to long-aged *barculè*. And then there is the sausage, a traditional ingredient of *Fritto misto*¹¹ and used to season many dishes. With salami there is the recollection of the atmosphere of hot sunny barnyards and the lowing of the cows in the stalls. At the beginning of the winter the pig was slaughtered and in the cold months one ate *Lasagne al sangue*, *Fritto misto*, *Batsoà*¹², sausages, *Grive della Langa*, Chickpea Soup with Pork Ribs¹³, and *Oriòn*. In the vast, dark and airy *tinaggio* [cellar] the other cuts remained for the months to come. Meanwhile, everyone looked forward to the convivial moment when the *salame crudo stagiunà* [cured aged *salame*], *salame cotto*, *pancetta* and *coppa* were ready to eat.

Poor, Simple Ingredients for a Great, Emotional Cuisine

Any food, above all that of one's own land, confers impulses which have a backdrop transcending that of gastronomy. Take for example *bagna caoda*: so easy to prepare and considered a dish for the poor, yet it is served in well-to-do households. It always gives a sense of physical and emotional community to those who gather around the table and dip their cardoons in the same *dianèt*

¹¹ Translator's note: the recipe for *Fritto Misto* is on page 98.

¹² Translator's note: the recipe for *Batsoà* (Langa Pork Hocks) is on page 96.

¹³ Translator's note: the recipe for *Minestrone di ceci e di costine di maiale* (Chickpea Soup with Pork Ribs) is on page 68.

[terracotta casserole]. The resulting atmosphere encourages sentimental exchanges and likewise the words necessary to express the sincerity of these exchanges.

As another example, think of the *Frittata di cipolle*¹⁴. Onions, like garlic and cabbage, have an odour of incredible poverty which is elevated to great dignity when mixed with eggs in a frittata. This frittata evokes hearty images of great health, of tantalizing aromas, wine gulped down with a smacking of lips. It provides a true portrait of the civilization and culture of the lower classes that, by eating some dishes, had an impression that a better future was at hand.

Leafing through this cookbook one realises with disappointment to that *Blood Lasagne* is no longer as widespread a dish as it should be. The difficulty in procuring fresh pigs' blood in the city is an almost insurmountable problem; this dish necessitates close contact with the farm where the pig is slaughtered and it also assumes that dinner guests are not gastronomically squeamish. What is required, then, are folks of an older temperament, who wholeheartedly embrace celebrating a pagan rite.

Macaron del Frèt, a Culinary Bridge Between Napoli and the Langhe

Today we consider *Macaron del frèt*¹⁵ to be part of the Langhe cuisine. But we must render unto Caesar that which is his and unto

¹⁴ Translator's note: the recipe for *Frittata di cipolle* (Onion Frittata) is on page 86.

¹⁵ Translator's note: the recipe for *Macaron del Frèt* [Handmade Macaroni] is on page 64.

Napoli that which is theirs, therefore acknowledging that this dish's origins are Neapolitan rather than from the Langhe. It is said that when the *maestri* of the glassmakers' guild ventured from their town, Altare¹⁶, and travelled around Italy to teach the art of glass blowing, they even went as far as Napoli. Upon returning home, it is more than likely that they brought back the manual technique of using a thin metal rod to make a type of *fusilli* [spiral shaped pasta]. The technique was familiar to them as it resembled that which they used to turn the heavy metal rod to which molten glass was attached. The rolling movement of the tool used by the glassmaker sitting at his bench is similar to the movement with palms of the hands used to coax the dough around the metal rod. Upon tasting the new dish, the housewives of the Langhe wanted to make it their own, and so they adapted it using an implement with which they were already familiar: the knitting needle, or *fret* in Piedmontese dialect. Moreover, the word *macaron* is the dialectal adaptation of the Neapolitan word *maccheroni*.

The Wines of the Langhe: a Long History and Many Virtues

The people of the Langhe discovered in wine making a vocation for which they were naturally gifted. The 18th century saw the beginning of a revolutionary idea: vines began to be planted on the hillsides, irrevocably and forever changing the landscape of the Langhe. Prior to this, the vines had been grown in the plains, and

¹⁶ Translator's note: Altare is a town not far from Savona, south of the Langhe hills going toward the Ligurian Sea. In centuries past a notable group of master glass workers was based there.

apart from increasing the space available, the various positions and exposures contributed to characteristics of the grapes and in turn various aspects of the wines. In the following century, a school for viticulture and oenology was founded in Alba, in 1881. A few years later the school director, Professor Domizio Cavazza, began experimenting with the changes that ageing could bring about in young wines. He found that they were well suited for long term ageing, at the end of which they had become dry. Following the example of Barolo, other red wines like Barbaresco, Dolcetto and Nebbiolo achieved greatness.

Meanwhile the vines continued to suffer from increased parasites. Particularly devastating was Phylloxera and its invasion resulted in the eventual replanting of the vines in the area, giving rise to a new variety: Barbera. At this point wine making began to evolve ever more rapidly. The advent of farm machinery was a welcome contribution which alleviated the workload. In this period, then, small wineries began to proliferate, and the volume of production grew to a point that for the first time farmers needed to organize themselves to work together (rather than each merely tending his own vines), to get the work done more efficiently. Thus wine took its place within the cultural and economic traditions of the Langhe.

Modernization, technology, and an effective organizational approach could not, however, erase the emotional participation of the farmer, whose experience went back for millennia of generations. It is this very experience which permits the farmer to make confident decisions about how far along the hill can he reasonably expect to grow Barbera, which is the best place to grow Dolcetto, and where can the Nebbiolo best flourish.

This emotional participation is so strong a bond to the land that it allows writers who have breathed the countryside to write pages of poetry; they live with this land inside them. The twentieth century Langa writer Cesare Pavese, in his collection of poems

*Lavorare stanca*¹⁷, elegizes wines and vineyards declaring that where there is wine there are girls who laugh merrily. A local farmers' proverb says "*l'acqua fa male, il vino fa cantare*" ["water will make you hurt, wine will make you sing"], and the meaning is that a glass of wine represents an occasion to remember, to contemplate oneself and take stock of life. A farmer lives his days alternating between joy, satisfaction, and pride on the one hand, and fear, superstitious interpretations bound to ancient religions, and traditions on the other. Consider: hail storms (wrongdoing and punishment), the moon (which regulates seasonal expirations), wood (which made technical advances in winemaking possible), and the ox (a "sacred animal"). These all have become points of reference for the people of the Langhe.

The farmer goes down into the *cantina* [cellar] and draws some wine from a barrel. Sipping it, he experiences the flavours of long hard work and arduous waiting, which his family and friends will later appreciate when his wine is served at the innumerable *merende sinòire* during the long Langhe winters.

Wine was sometimes even appreciated as food. Moscato d'Asti, for example, evokes memories of our older relatives, enjoyed it when out working the fields; around six in the morning, after having already cut two or three rows of the field with the scythe they would take a little rest. Some wine was poured into a bowl with a bit of water, and bread was dipped into it. This was breakfast in the times when hay was cut by hand. How good it was!

¹⁷ Translator's note: the book of poems *Lavorare stanca* by Cesare Pavese is published in English in the volume *Disaffections: Complete Poems 1930-1950*.

The "Water of Life", or Grappa

The distillation of wine was originally practiced in zones that produced low alcohol content wine, while zones producing wines with higher alcohol content distilled the pomace, which then became grappa. Grappa was made exclusively from pomace from both white and red grapes. In Alba, where grappa has always been made, it was originally held to be a liquor for the common folk and therefore not very esteemed. However, since the 1970s, it has become something of product for discriminating palates and has enjoyed renewed appreciation.

Historically, grappa was obtained by direct-flame distillation, but today there are a few producers who still prefer this quicker method. For the most part, today grappa is made through a steam heating process. Usually the pomace of various varieties is all mixed together into one batch; however there are some grappas which are made from one variety exclusively¹⁸, for example Nebbiolo or Moscato which yield particularly fragrant products. At one time grappa was drunk without any ageing and it was colourless. Today many of them are aged in oak, acquiring a warm amber colour and a more intense and aromatic scent with a rounder flavour as well. Grappa is typically served at the end of a meal and often added to an *espresso* for a stimulating and invigorating coffee.

¹⁸ Translator's note: These are called *monovitigno* grappas, and are the most appreciated and sought after by connoisseurs.

One Hundred Recipes from the Cuisine of Alba and the Langhe: the Rewards of Lengthy Research

True hunger has the power to make almost anything taste good. The fact that the cuisine of the Langhe is based on meagre ingredients does not imply that the recipes therefore result in bad tasting dishes. Poor people who were hungry were enthusiastically motivated and creative, and they passed down old recipes through the generations keeping alive old images, emotions and anecdotes in successive generations.

With this book we attempted on the one hand to carry out unbiased research on the traditional cuisine of the Langhe, relying on oral traditions where historical records were lacking; on the other hand we tried to comment on the intimate psychological correlations of food to society and family life. As for the recipes, we strove not to lose ourselves in the joy of remembering and reminiscing about those delights cooked up by the great-grandmothers and baked by the great-aunts, but in the end these memories were almost impossible to ignore as they were evident in every interview and testimonial. This however resulted in various points of view as well as numerous versions of the same recipe, which needed to be resolved and distilled into one representational version. We also utilized newsletters, libraries, and the archives of *l'Ordine dei Cavalieri del Tartufo e dei Vini d'Alba* [The Order of the Cavaliers of the Truffle and Wines of Alba], as well as scholarly publications and authoritative sources. Foremost among these were the archives of the Famija Albeisa in Alba and the important work of Armando Monte¹⁹. The aim was to integrate all the collected information into a document reflecting and sustaining the

¹⁹ Translator's note: Armando Monte, *Una cucina da salvare*. Toso, Torino 1968. Published under the auspices of Famija Albeisa.

current gastronomic situation, with hypotheses and references to the psychological and relational implications.

There has always been reference to a given recipe as having been “my grandmother’s”, without, however, examining the psychological and emotional content of this comment. There is a mediating factor between food and who eats it, a role assumed by the images which are evoked by that recipe.

Certainly this book will not be lacking in missing information or gastronomic and psychological oversights. But the true text is that which will be written by whoever comes next, whoever adds their own notations and comments in the margins. Indeed, I was actually encouraged (we might say pushed!), by Luciano De Giacomo, who one day said to me: “My book, *Confidenze di un Gran Maestro* [A Master's Thoughts], is out of print. Rather than reprint it, why don't you just rewrite it?”

And this work of rewriting, redoing, rediscovering and adding is the vehicle by which one can pass along not only gastronomic improvements, but also those which are cultural and spiritual, so that future generations can experience what Dante's Ulysses expresses: “*Fatti non foste a viver come bruti, ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza*” [You were not born to live as brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge.]²⁰ By passing along our recipes, images and experiences to future generations, we will continue to live in them.

²⁰ Translator's note: Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*. Princeton, 1970. (Translation by Charles S. Singleton).

My Land, Myself

by Luciano De Giacomi

Sometimes I have a sensation of being a part of this land which is my birthplace. I feel it on every hill in the spring when the trees, meadows and vines burst into life. I feel it in the summer when the earth soaks up the sweat of those working in the sun drenched vineyards, and in the incomparable poetry of autumn when breathtaking colours cover the hilltops while the fragrance of grape must wafts through the air. I feel it in the winter as well, under the snow which covers everything, immersed in the protective fog or the driving rain which transforms the hillsides into endless mud puddles.

If I could, I would stay in the Langhe forever, no offense intended toward Alba or other urban centres. I've read about people with lifelong passions that both propel them and consume them. This is what the Langhe is for me: I live every day through a sixth sense that seems to become more acute over time.

Through the years I have come to know the most diverse and widespread details of the Langhe, from the gifts which it offers to the toil and hardships its inhabitants at times experience in reaping them. Yet if my love for the Langhe on the one hand magnifies the positive aspects of this land, it does not, on the other hand, inhibit my ability to comprehend the difficulties presented to those who live and work there. This is why I have never hidden the unhappiness I feel in seeing farmers exhaust themselves in this terribly uneven terrain where the vineyards are either precariously terraced or planted on the steep slopes.

At the same time I have always believed in the resources and possibilities that present themselves in the Langhe. One need only

think of the panoramic landscapes offered to visitors, the castles and towns perched on the hilltops, or of the local wines and cuisine. All that was needed was to understand all this and to organize the necessary initiatives toward appreciating the Langhe region to its fullest.

Luciano De Giacomo (1921-1995) was a pharmacist in Alba, but he was also an oenogastronome and a pioneer in the movement to recognize, esteem and preserve the traditional foods and wines of the Langhe region in northwest Italy. A founding member and Gran Maestro of *l'Ordine dei Cavalieri del Tartufo e dei Vini di Alba* [The Order of the Cavaliers of the Truffle and Wines of Alba], he wrote numerous works on gastronomy and oenology. Reproduced here is an excerpt from *Confidenze di un Gran Maestro*, published in 1972.

Memories of Nonna Genia

By Antonio De Giacomo

Nonna Genia was my great-grandmother, and though I was very young when she died, too young to have any memory of her, there was a small overlap which allowed for the brief intersecting of our lives. My late father Luciano De Giacomo, pharmacist, connoisseur of wine and the cuisine of Alba and the Langhe, often talked about it.

After decades Nonna Genia, (Eugenia De Marchi, 1864-1950), continues to be a presence at important family feasts, particularly Christmas. A glance at the menu of any of these great meals attests to this: *Galantina di Cappone*, *Paté di Fegato*, *Agnolotti al Sugo d'Arrosto*, roast turkey with potatoes and green salad, the *Marrons Glacés* with whipped cream... together with the faithful companionship of Nebbiolo d'Alba, Barolo, and Moscato d'Asti. And of course there is another inestimable presence: the fragrant white Alba truffle, shaved paper-thin and exalting whatever dish it is added to.

When she was in her early twenties, the future Nonna Genia married Antonio De Giacomo, for whom I am named. In addition to producing Barbera and above all Dolcetto (the everyday wine of choice for the majority of households in Alba) he was also among the first of the area's wine producers to extol the virtues of Barbaresco. There are still three bottles in the family of the 1870 vintage, which was so smooth and had such an intense bouquet that it epitomized the graces of the Nebbiolo varietal: "*armonica robusta gentilezza*" that is, "harmonious and robust softness."

The *Cannon d'Oro*, a hotel and restaurant nestled in the shadow of Alba's cathedral, was run for more than a century by the

De Giacomo family. Its last proprietors were Antonio and Genia, during the last years of the 19th century. They primed their children to go into other professions, while at the same time endowing them with a love and appreciation of good food and wine.

During the 19th century, when the railroad came to Alba, the *Cannon d'Oro* and another local restaurant, *Buoi Rossi*, would send their carriages to the train station to vie for clients. Nonna Genia kept a notebook of recipes, like many other cooks, but hers included those that were a bit more unusual and less representative of the area, taken out of the newspaper or suggested by a friend. There was no need for her to write amounts and procedures for the recipes of local fare, such as *Tajarin*, *Agnolotti*, *Fonduta*, *Bollito*, *Pollo alla cacciatore*, *Coniglio con i peperoni*, *Fritto misto*... There were variations on these but only to adjust for a particular occasion or the availability of ingredients; who needed a recipe? To her, a recipe was part and parcel of knowing how to cook, knowledge to be passed along to daughters and daughters-in-law. The little secrets that resulted from personal trial and error were better kept to memory.

In the 1960's the city of Alba grew quite a bit, happily due to local companies; specifically the fashion and confectionary industries enjoyed immense success. One result of this, however, was that a great many people moved away from the country, and along with this their eating habits changed. A group of people who were passionate about good food and also in love with their land realized that a great culinary tradition was at risk of being lost, though not due to lack of innovation but rather through losing touch with its roots.

The idea was not merely to hastily throw together a bunch of copied recipes, as is done so often today, but to effect real research: starting at home and extending it to acquaintances and chefs at local *trattorie*, with the attendant testing and transcriptions, to achieve something more genuine and lasting. The group which was so passionately dedicated to the project came from a local

community organization called *Famija Albeisa*, [the Alba Family]. In November 1967, in a *trattoria* at the foot of the hills near the Castello di Grinzane di Cavour they subsequently founded a prestigious brotherhood, *l'Ordine dei Cavalieri del Tartufo e dei Vini d'Alba*, [The Order of the Cavaliers of the Truffle and Wines of Alba].

The *Cavalieri* still hold their meetings in the castle which sits amid the vineyards in Grinzane Cavour, just outside Alba. Today the castle is also the headquarters of a museum dedicated to the culture of local farms as well as the Grinzane Cavour literary prize and the annual international truffle auction. In the 1500's it was the residence of Pietrino Belli, advisor to Emperors Carlo V, Filippo II and Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy. In the 1800's it was home to Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, who was the architect of the unification of Italy and was the country's first prime minister. He was responsible for the renovation of the family's vineyards and modernizing oenological techniques.

Chief among the *Cavalieri* was my father, Luciano De Giacomo, who yearned for the lost paradises of the countryside and his boyhood, and the memories of his grandmother Genia's cooking with its wise, balanced flavours. When it came time to publish a book after years of research, it seemed only logical to use her name as the title, in so doing transforming her into a symbol of Alba's oenogastronomic tradition as well as making her into the representative of a generation of women whose lives had provided countless fond memories, even if hardly recognized in their own day.

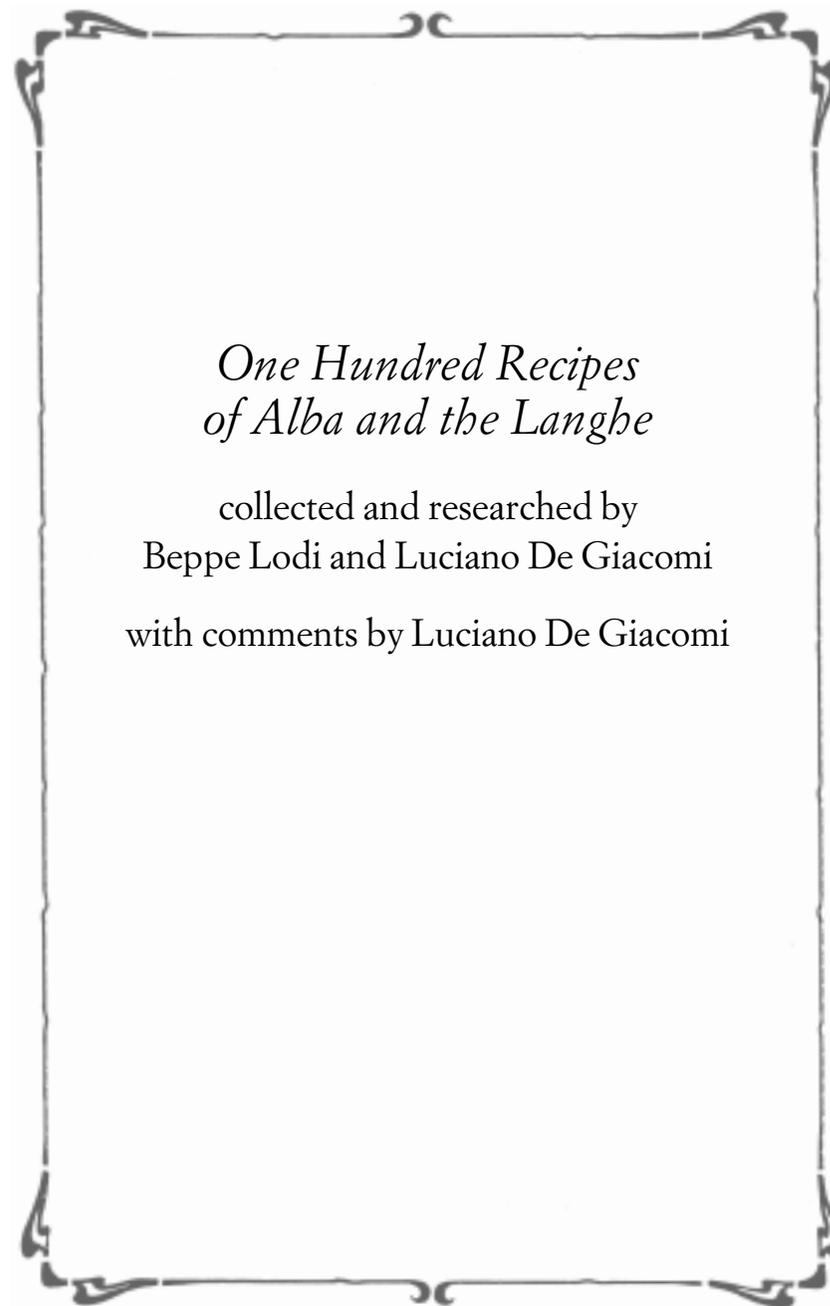
My father once said: "My *Mare Granda* [grand-mother in Piedmontese dialect] loved being surrounded by her large family – sisters-in-law, children, grandchildren – at a time when it was hard to get everyone together. Gathering around the table to eat was an immense pleasure, and she offered this pleasure to her family and friends accomplishing it with true joy, as if it were an art." I also remember my grandfather sitting in the kitchen with his newspaper

while the women went to mass, keeping an eye on the roast. He would baste it, alternating three times wine and three with water. And, whenever I dip vegetables into *Bagna caoda*, I relive a ritual of jovial eating and friendship.

The founder of the Slow Food movement, Carlo Petrini, in his recent book *Buono, pulito e giusto. Principi di nuova gastronomia*, cites my father Luciano De Giacomo among his three most influential teachers (along with the Barolo producers Bartolo Mascarello and Battista Rinaldi): “I learned so much from them about what it means to be a gastronome and the importance of one’s ability to communicate with others.”

This is what these recipes are about. They are a product of culture. They tell us, indirectly, of a geographical area, its cultivation, its products, its traditions.

Antonio De Giacomo is the son of Luciano De Giacomo and the great-grandson of Eugenia De Marchi. He was born in Alba. After earning a degree in contemporary literature at the University of Torino he embarked on a career in the unions and public administration. He inherited his father’s passion for the wines, cuisine and land of Alba and the Langhe.



*One Hundred Recipes
of Alba and the Langhe*

collected and researched by
Beppe Lodi and Luciano De Giacomo
with comments by Luciano De Giacomo



Bagnè 'nt l'òli Vegetables Dipped in Oil

siulòt [scallions] – *aiét* [spring garlic] – *tomatìche* [tomatoes] – *seleri* [celery] – *fnuin* [fennel] – *ravanin* [radishes] – various other vegetables in season – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – salt.

A serving plate, small bowls or cups, forks, knives.

Wash and trim all the vegetables and arrange them on a serving plate. This is a fresh summer treat. The scallions, garlic, tomatoes, celery, fennel, radishes and all the other flavourful vegetables come from the gardens of the Vaccheria [an area just outside of Alba] or from your own. Use a flavourful, full-bodied oil, like the one brought by mule from Liguria travelling along the salt route [this was the trade route which connected the Piedmont region with Liguria]. Each person serves himself the vegetables and pours some oil into a small individual dipping bowl. The vegetables are dipped into the oil which has been seasoned only with salt; no other condiments (vinegar, lemon, pepper) are needed.

Traditionally, everyone dipped into the same large bowl, as is done for *bagna cauda* (see page 102), and every now and then more oil was added. One could ask, “Why not just make a big salad?” Because it would not have been the same. It would have been impersonal – more complicated and not as friendly. By dipping into the same bowl family unity triumphs with a sense of togetherness from which outsiders are excluded. The same is true whether eating *bagna cauda* in the winter by the fireplace in the kitchen or when enjoying this dish in the summer in the garden under the *tòpia* [grape arbour]: a genuine country experience.



Langhe Freisa

The suggested pairings of food and wine are traditional or in any case considered the most appropriate. This does not exclude the possibility of experimenting with combinations of flavours, colours and aromas. The sequence of the recipes follows the order of a Piedmontese menu: antipasti, first courses, second courses, dessert. An alphabetical index can be found at the end of the book.





Acciughe al verde Anchovies in Green Sauce

Serves 4

Preparation: 1 hour

20 anchovies in salt, well rinsed and bones removed – 3 garlic cloves – 20g (1/2 cup) fresh parsley – 20g (1/2 cup) fresh basil – 1 dried red chilli pepper – yolks of 2 hard boiled eggs – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 30ml (2 tablespoons) vinegar.

A cutting board, a chopping knife, a large bowl, a small serving plate.

Rinse the anchovies; split them and remove the bones. Finely chop the parsley, garlic, basil, red chilli pepper and egg yolks. Transfer to bowl and blend in the vinegar and enough oil to obtain a dense sauce (more oil may be used if a thinner consistency is desired). Arrange the prepared anchovies on the serving plate and cover them with the sauce; repeat with another layer of anchovies and sauce, and continue with alternating layers until all the sauce has been used.



Langhe Chardonnay



This is a very simple starter – one might even say humble – yet it is so appetizing and fragrant that there is no need to improve upon it or attempt to transform it into something more sophisticated. As with other recipes that follow, this is a dish which reminds us of the age-old links between the Langhe and Liguria. The salt route that runs along the hilltops and joins these two regions is still breathtaking today because of the variety of landscapes on the two sides of the hills. In particular the transitions from one season to the next unfold differently, and these changes are more pronounced in the hills of the Langhe. But in early spring the Ligurian hills burst into bloom, starkly contrasting with the Langhe which is often still covered in snow. And in autumn the Langhe distinguishes itself from its Ligurian counterpart with the splendid reds leaves of its recently harvested vineyards.

From the Langhe wine was transported to Liguria, and then olive oil, salt and anchovies were all brought back to the Saturday market near the cathedral in Alba. At home the anchovies were placed in a big bowl and covered with oil (the best available) and stored in the *erca* [bread chest]. Every now and then one was nibbled, bones and all, eaten with bread to make it last longer. And if it was a day when polenta had been made, then we enjoyed a long, slow, flavourful meal. Such misty memories of long ago and far away... In this era of *nouvelle cuisine* we should remain loyal to the healthy simplicity of our traditions, without it making us feel old-fashioned.



“Soma d’aj” Garlic Bruschetta

Serves 1

Preparation: 10 minutes

2 slices of *tirolin* [bread baked in a wood oven], toasted – 2 garlic cloves – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – salt

A knife, a plate.

Just bread, oil, garlic, and salt. Peel the garlic, dip it in the oil and rub it on the freshly toasted bread. Sprinkle with salt and serve. It can be accompanied by some Dolcetto or Moscato grapes when in season.



Langhe Dolcetto



“Cocone” in insalata Caesar’s Mushroom Salad

Serves 6

Preparation: 30 minutes

800g (1³/₄ lbs) Caesar’s mushrooms (*Amanita cesarea*) – 20g (1/2 cup) fresh parsley, chopped – 3 anchovies – 145ml (2/3 cup) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – juice of 2 lemons – 2 egg yolks – 1 garlic clove

A sharp knife, a small mixing bowl, a fork, a *grilèt* [salad bowl].

Clean the mushrooms and thinly slice them into the salad bowl. Chop the parsley and as finely as possible, and mash the anchovies into little pieces. Pour the olive oil and the lemon juice into the mixing bowl. Add the egg yolks, then the parsley and the anchovies. Bruise the garlic and stick a fork into it, then use the fork (with the garlic on the tines) to whisk the other ingredients until a creamy emulsion is obtained. Pour the sauce over the sliced mushrooms, toss gently and serve.

Translator’s note: The species *Amanita cesarea* which is native to Europe is highly prized for its flavour. However, given the general toxicity of the genus *Amanita*, the amateur is strongly cautioned to ascertain the identity of any wild mushroom.



Langhe Arneis





Carne cruda in insalata Piedmontese Steak Tartare

Serves 5

Preparation: 20 minutes

500g (generous 1 lb) extra lean veal rump – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – salt – pepper – two lemons – 1 garlic clove – when in season: 200g (scant 1/2 lb) Caesar’s mushrooms, or 100g (3 1/2 oz) fresh Alba truffles

A large sharp knife, a cutting board, a serving plate.

Chop the veal very finely. Dress it with the oil, pepper, lemon juice, salt and a crushed clove of garlic. Mix thoroughly with hands (not a fork). When blended, transfer to a serving plate and spread it out flat. When available, cover with finely sliced Caesar’s mushrooms or truffles. Serve immediately while the meat still has its fresh, inviting, light pink colour.



Piemonte Grignolino



One thing should be made clear: when we speak of this raw meat salad “*all’Albese*” [Alba style], we are not at all referring to the strange stuff served up by some lazy and superficial restaurateurs. They are merely serving slices of raw meat smothered in oil, trying to pass it off as the genuine dish. Those who are more honest call it “*carne alla zingara*” [gypsy-style meat], knowing that it is not possible to confuse the two.

This salad is an original, lively dish which can only be made with the freshest meat obtained from the hindquarters of the calf of the Piedmontese breed. Only extremely lean meat must be used, without any fat or gristle. It must be very finely minced (not ground!) on a chopping board using just the right knife and not minced by the butcher, since then it will not be at its freshest when served. Most important, it is to be prepared and served immediately while it is rosy and appetizing. After finely chopping the meat, put it into a mixing bowl and add the garlic, olive oil, lemon juice and a pinch of salt. It should then be mixed with the hands and not a spoon or fork. This is not simply because it is the only way to correctly blend all the ingredients, but because only by using the hands can one appreciate the intimacy involved in preparing food in general, and this dish in particular. When in season, the addition of fresh truffle shavings harmonizes beautifully with the other ingredients. It is a dish with a delicate, slightly pungent flavour and will not leave any traces of grease on the plate, as do the unpleasant imitations mentioned above.



*“Sarsèt” con uova,
tonno e cipolline*
Valerian Salad with Eggs,
Tuna and Scallions

Serves 4

400g (scant 1 lb) valerian – 50g (1¾ oz) tuna in oil (drained weight) – 3 scallions, finely sliced – 2 hardboiled eggs, chopped coarsely – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – vinegar – salt

A salad bowl.

Rinse and pick over the valerian, pat or spin dry and place in the bowl. Drain the oil from the tuna and add it to the valerian with the scallions and egg. Toss with the oil, vinegar and salt to taste and serve.

The winter kept the peasants indoors, but when the seasons changed, going out to the *suri* [sunny hillsides] meant direct and delicate contact with nature, just as it does for us today. A sunny day motivated one to rediscover the rhythms of the farm and wander through the vineyards to check for any winter damage; there was work to be organized and baskets to be filled with young greens such as valerian. Back home, in the kitchen, the greens were picked over and washed, and dressed in the *grilèt* [salad bowl]. Then the fresh eggs were boiled and the tin of tuna, some salt, oil and scallions were added. Our ancestors were partly Ligurian in their eating habits, hence the valerian, spring onions and eggs went together well with Ligurian salt, oil and tuna.

This is a humble dish in terms of the simplicity



Langhe Bianco



of its ingredients, yet rich in terms of its genuineness. It is especially uplifting when redolent of the aroma of violets that grow in the fields near the valerian, making for a pleasing and aromatic spring dish which renews the contact and friendship between man and nature. Tuna was not always part of this dish and when it was added it was never a large quantity: it was expensive and was bought at the Saturday market in Alba in Piazza Rossetti. The younger members at the dining table would hurry to pick out the tuna chunks before they were mixed into the salad.

This is a dish for spring: happy, delicately scented, renewing our contact and friendship with nature.

The end of the cold winter and its abundant snow brought about a sigh of relief, like being reborn. It was time to get out of the old farmhouses and go to the *suri* – places blessed by the sun – to rediscover the harmony with the vineyards, taking stock of the winter’s toll, straightening wobbly stakes, begin pruning, and so on.

How pleasant to observe the reawakening of nature, to enjoy walking amid the thousands of signs of spring: the buds, grass and leaves all coming to life. Such joy even in resting a bit to get your breath back and then spying the fresh, tender, newly sprouted valerian among the vine rows. In no time the basket was filled, and then at home it was picked over and washed in the large, cosy kitchen. Who, among those of us who are not so young, doesn’t have fond memories of those kitchens? It was there that the whole family gathered around the big, old, heavy, table, each doing a different job and taking in the various smells from the stove, where there was always something simmering. Or memories of sitting near the fireplace in spring, where the grandparents loved to rest, though even they helped out... Those ample kitchens were not only a place to prepare food but also to take in the meal itself. How sad today’s tiny kitchens are, so small that this in itself shows how disinterested we’ve become in making meals. In the huge kitchens of the past we all gathered for meals and joyfully tasted this unique dish of valerian, boiled eggs and spring onions; such fresh, simple produce!



Vitello “Tonnè” Veal with Tonnè Sauce

Serves 8

Preparation: 20 minutes

Marinating time: 24 hours

Cooking time: 2 hours

4 kg (1 lb) veal silverside or rump roast – white wine vinegar – water – salt – 1 onion, coarsely chopped – 2 cloves – 2 black peppercorns – 1 cinnamon stick – 2 bay leaves – 15g (1 tablespoon) butter – 10 anchovies in salt, well rinsed and bones removed – 6g (1 tablespoon) flour– the yolk of 1 hard boiled egg, mashed – 10 capers, rinsed in tepid water

A large earthenware bowl, a wooden spoon, a copper saucepan, a *setaccio* [sieve], a large knife.

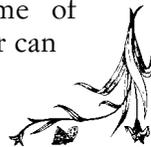
Put the veal in an earthenware bowl just big enough to hold the meat, and cover with white vinegar and water, 1 to 4 parts. Add the salt, onion, cloves, pepper, cinnamon and the bay leaves and marinate for 12 hours.

Melt the butter in the copper saucepan, add the marinated meat and brown it on all sides. Mix in the anchovies, stirring until they dissolve. Add the flour and egg yolk, then the liquid from the marinade, and cook slowly. When the sauce is reduced and fairly thick, add the capers. Remove the meat and sieve the sauce. Slice the meat, arrange on a serving plate and spoon the sauce over it. Serve cold.



Roero Arneis

Translator’s note: Traditionally the sauce was puréed through a sieve; in the name of expediency a blender or hand-held mixer can be used.



Despite the similar-sounding name, this is not “*vitello tonnato*” [veal and tuna sauce]. It is a completely different dish where tuna plays no part. It must be remembered that we are quite near to France and that for a time we were under its rule; our dialect has numerous affinities with French. As far as I’m concerned, however, “*vitello tonnè*” simply means “marinated veal” and nothing else.

This recipe is about two hundred years old and came down to me through my grandfather’s notebooks about his gastronomic experiences, all written by Nonna Genia. It is a rather particular recipe and the cook needs to be endowed with a certain ability. This is not the usual tuna-based mayonnaise sauce which accompanies boiled veal in *vitello tonnato*, an admittedly excellent dish but with a totally different flavour and a recipe which appeared about 100 years after *vitello tonnè*. Here, the marinated meat, the anchovies, that touch of vinegar, pepper and cinnamon, and the onion all are blended into something pleasantly spicy, fresh and appetizing.



Patè di tonno Tuna Pâtè

Serves 4

Preparation: 45 minutes, plus 7-8 hours to set in the refrigerator

200g (7 oz) tuna in oil (drained weight) – 2 anchovies in salt, well rinsed and bones removed – 50g ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) butter, room temperature – parsley – mayonnaise

A large bowl, a wooden spoon, a sieve, a long rectangular metal mould.

Sieve the tuna, anchovies and the butter and mix thoroughly. Put the mixture into the mould and refrigerate for 7-8 hours. Turn the pâtè out onto a plate, spread with a layer of mayonnaise and serve garnished with fresh parsley sprigs.

Translator's note: Although in the past this dish was prepared entirely with a sieve, for the sake of expediency a food processor can be used to purée the tuna and anchovies. However, it is preferable not to work in the butter in the processor as it will become warm and adversely affect the flavour of the whole mixture.



Langhe Favorita



Patè di fegato Liver Pâtè

Serves 6

Preparation: 20 minutes
Cooking time: 20 minutes
Standing time: 10 hours in the fridge

250g ($\frac{1}{2}$ lb) veal liver – 250g ($\frac{1}{2}$ lb) chicken liver – 400g ($1\frac{3}{4}$ cups) butter, room temperature – 1 sprig of rosemary – a few fresh sage leaves – 75ml ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup) Marsala wine – 75ml ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup) cognac – 5g ($\frac{1}{20}$ oz) fresh Alba truffle, diced

A saucepan, a sieve, a large bowl, a long rectangular metal mould.

Wash the veal and chicken livers well in cold running water. Cut them into thin slices and brown in the saucepan with the butter, rosemary and sage. Add the Marsala and cook over low heat for twenty minutes. Remove the herbs and sieve the livers. In a bowl work the livers together with the butter, keeping the mixture cool so that the butter doesn't melt, which will change its flavour. When combined add the cognac; mix well and add the diced truffles. Put the mixture into the mould and refrigerate for 8-10 hours. Turn out onto a plate and serve.



Nebbiolo d'Alba

Translator's note: Traditionally the pâté was puréed through a sieve; in the name of expediency a food processor can be used to purée the cooked livers. However, it is preferable not to work in the butter in the processor as it will become warm and adversely affect the flavour of the whole mixture.





Risotto con le "grive" Risotto with Thrushes

Serves 5

Preparation: 1 hour

Cooking time for thrushes: 2½ hours

Cooking time for rice: 30 minutes

10 thrushes – 100g (scant ½ cup) butter – 60ml (¼ cup) Marsala wine – 40 juniper berries – 400g (2 cups) raw Carnaroli rice – 2 onions, sliced – 50g (¼ cup) veal bone marrow – salt – pepper – 1½ litres (scant 6½ cups) vegetable or beef broth – 230ml (1 cup) dry white wine

A large copper skillet with lid, a small copper skillet, a deep copper saucepan, serving fork, wooden spoon, a *dobion* [sieve], a round serving plate.

Remove the heads and innards from the thrushes and singe them. Set aside heads and innards for the *salmi* sauce. Put the butter and the thrushes into the large copper skillet and when browned add enough broth to cover; leave to cook over low heat for two hours with the lid on. When cooked, add the Marsala and the *salmi* sauce (recipe below). To serve, place the risotto (recipe below) in a mound on a round serving dish and make a nest-like depression in the centre. Pour the thrush mixture into the “nest” and serve immediately.

Salmi sauce for the thrushes: Brown the thrush heads, livers, hearts and the gizzards in butter along with the juniper berries. Sieve the mixture and add to the thrushes in the pan.

Risotto: Heat the veal marrow and add the sliced onions, cooking them until lightly browned. Add the rice and cook until well coated. Add the white wine and allow to cook down slowly. Add enough broth to cover and stir until occasionally to prevent sticking until almost absorbed. Repeat this step until rice is cooked.



Dolcetto di Diano d'Alba



Risotto alla piemontese Piedmontese Risotto

Serves 4

Preparation: 10 minutes

Cooking time: ½ hour

400g (2 cups) raw Carnaroli rice – 1 sprig of rosemary – 2 onions, finely chopped – 50g (¼ cup) veal marrow – 2 fresh tomatoes – 15ml (1 tablespoon) tomato paste – 150ml (⅔ cup) Dolcetto wine – salt – pepper – 1 litre (1 quart) broth

A copper saucepan, a large wooden spoon.

Melt the marrow in the saucepan and brown the onions with the rosemary. Add the tomatoes, the tomato paste and the rice, cook until the liquid is almost absorbed and add the wine. Add enough broth to cover and cook, stirring frequently and adding more broth as it cooks down, until the rice is tender but not overcooked and the liquid becomes creamy from the rice starch, approximately 18 minutes from when the first ladle of broth is added.

Translator's note: Nowadays veal marrow is often substituted with an equal amount of butter.



Piemonte Pinot nero





“Tajarin” *al sugo di fegatini*
Tagliatelle with
Chicken Liver Sauce

Serves 4

Preparation: 1½ hours

Cooking times: for sauce, 1 hour
for tagliatelle, 2-3 minutes

500g (5 cups) flour – 4 eggs – salt – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – cornmeal – broth – 1 onion – rosemary – 3 chicken livers, finely chopped – butter – 100g (3½ oz) ground lean veal – 240g (1½ cups) chopped canned tomatoes with their juice, or 60ml (4 tablespoons) tomato paste dissolved in 230ml (1 cup) hot water

A wooden table or other suitable worktop, a rolling pin, a saucepan, a casserole, a large knife, a fork, a dish towel, a skimmer.

Put the flour on the work top, make a well in the middle and break the eggs into it. Add a pinch of salt, 5ml (1 teaspoon) oil and knead until it becomes a firm dough. Rub the surface with oil and let stand for 2 hours. Knead it again and then roll out into a thin sheet. Let it stand for a few minutes then dust it with cornmeal, roll it up and slice it into very thin ribbons. Unroll the strips and place them on a dish towel to dry. Cook the *tajarin* in boiling salted water for a few minutes, drain, and serve with the chicken liver sauce (recipe follows).



Dolcetto d'Alba



Chicken liver sauce: Finely chop the onion with the rosemary leaves and sauté until golden in the butter and oil. Add the finely chopped chicken livers and veal. Let this mixture cook until browned, adding the broth a bit at a time, and adding more as it is cooked off. Add the tomato and continue cooking until the sauce has thickened.

Translator’s note: Prior to the final kneading the dough can be rolled up and sealed in plastic food wrap for 30 minutes. The same consistency is obtained without the risk of the dough drying out.

Before the towns drew the peasants from the countryside to the factories, we had a saying: “*Na fia l’e nen da mariè sa l’è nen buna a fè i tajarin cun la pressia*”, meaning: “a girl is not ready for marriage until she knows how to make tagliatelle”. Young farm girls enjoyed learning this skill. Their teachers were the grandmothers, the queens of the kitchen, who held on to their position as long as possible, even going as far as keeping their own daughters, married or not, out of the kitchen. These daughters were seen as possible usurpers and so the grandmothers directed their attention to the granddaughters who were not in the direct line of succession.

Several things were important for this handmade pasta: accurately measured ingredients, carefully rolling it out by hand using the *prèssia*, [rolling pin], and rapidly slicing the rolled up dough with an expert touch using a knife made from a piece of the *siessa* [scythe] used for cutting grass. Finally, but of great importance, was the water in which to cook the tagliatelle: not hard, but the softer water one could find in a well.

It was considered almost compulsory to serve the tagliatelle with this liver sauce. Made from the livers expressly set aside from chickens and rabbits prepared for other dishes, it is a delicious sauce which sustains yet doesn’t overpower the flavour of the pasta. It is tangy and pairs well with the wines of the Alba area.



Agnolotti al sugo di arrosto

Agnolotti with Gravy

Serves 8

Roasting time for the meat: 1½ hours

Preparation for agnolotti: 2 hours

Cooking time for the agnolotti: 10 minutes

A combination of 500g (generous 1 lb) veal and pork, for roasting – a sprig of rosemary – 2 garlic cloves – 1 small cabbage or head of escarole – butter – grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese – 4 eggs – salt, pepper, nutmeg – 400g (4 cups) flour

A copper casserole, a mixing bowl, a wooden spoon, clean dishtowels, a pasta cutter, a wooden table or other suitable worktop, a rolling pin, a skimmer, a deep serving plate.

Agnolotti are made up of a minced meat and vegetable filling enclosed in a small pocket of pasta.

Roast the veal and pork with garlic and rosemary. Finely mince the roasted meat and put it in a bowl. Boil, drain and finely chop the cabbage or escarole, drain and lightly brown in the saucepan with a bit of butter. Add to the meat and add a handful of grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, four egg whites, and a pinch each of salt, pepper and nutmeg. Mix well with a wooden spoon and set aside.

Make the pasta with the egg yolks and flour as for the tagliatelle on page 58. Roll it out one batch at a time into a thin sheet about 10cm (4 inches) wide. (Keep the remaining dough covered to avoid drying out.) Place a very small

amounts of the filling along one side of the sheet, leaving the other side empty to fold over. The mounds of filling should be about the size of a small nutmeg and be about 4cm (1½ inches) apart, leaving room for the border.

To close the agnolotti: Fold the empty side of the sheet of pasta over to cover the mounds of filling. With the external side of your pinkie (thumb in the air) press firmly around the mounds of filling to form the borders, while gently pressing the top of the pasta with the other hand to ensure that no air is trapped inside. Cut into squares and leave to dry on the dish towels which have



Dolcetto d'Alba



been dusted with flour, or if available, semolina. The finished agnolotti will be little square pockets of pasta, not more than 4cm (1½ inches) per side. Set aside to slightly dry on a clean dish towel sprinkled with flour, then cook them in abundant salted boiling water for a few minutes, drain well and serve with the gravy from the roast.

Translator's note: The use of the gravy from roasted meat as a sauce for pasta is not infrequent. By "gravy", however, it is meant the liquid and drippings from the roasting pan simply sieved or pureed, without the addition of any other ingredients such as flour or cornstarch.

It is said that agnolotti were invented by a French chef in Torino during a siege, at a time when many basic provisions were lacking. There was flour, and so it was possible to make fresh pasta. Other ingredients included some leftovers which were chopped up and combined to attenuate the various flavours. This mixture was put into little pouches of pasta because there were no extra eggs to bind together the mixture together for making even meatballs.

Along with the origins of agnolotti we find the inspiration for other examples of our "humble" dishes ("humble" agnolotti, indeed!): urgent necessity, lack of sufficient ingredients, the importance of not wasting anything, the simplicity of the basic components and a bit of imagination. But I am not so willing to accept the origins of this dish as attributed to the French chef mainly because agnolotti have been a part of the cuisine of this region for too many generations, and in a wide variety of versions, practically one for each little Langhe village and farmhouse. For a long time this dish was probably served as the single-course main Sunday meal, and over time a rare balance of flavours was achieved: the gravy from the roast meat was the sauce for the agnolotti while the meat itself was used in the filling.

In the highest and poorest parts of the Langhe, where veal or pork were often not available for economic reasons, they substituted pork and veal with barnyard rabbit, which was cooked and boned, and then used both for the filling and the sauce. This is a delicious variation and has a delicate, yet not by any means insubstantial flavour, and was skilfully prepared by the Langhe women.

The form and texture of the pasta can also be varied (quite thick, thin or extremely thin) and the shape can be square as is the tendency in Alba, slightly rectangular or "pessia", or "del plin" [pinched] for the hilly area from around Alba into the High Langhe area. They are all perfect, tasty and have a well-balanced filling which requires careful preparation.

My father taught me how to appreciate agnolotti with wine: put about a dozen freshly drained steaming agnolotti into a bowl and cover them immediately with Dolcetto wine, fishing them out one at a time with your fork.



Gnocchi al pomodoro Potato Gnocchi with Tomato Sauce

Serves 6

Preparation: 1½ hours

Cooking time: 10 minutes

1 kg (2¼ lbs) potatoes – 200g (2 cups) flour – 1 egg, slightly beaten – fresh tomato sauce – grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

A sieve, a knife, a fork, a saucepan, a skimmer, a wide shallow serving bowl.

Boil the potatoes in their skins, peel and sieve them while hot, and set aside to cool to room temperature. Put the flour and the egg with the sieved potatoes in a bowl and work the mixture by hand. Roll small amounts of the mixture into a thin cylinder and cut into small pieces. Sprinkle with flour or semolina and then roll them one at a time with the thumb firmly along the tines of a fork so they become grooved.

Cook the gnocchi in boiling salted water. As they rise to the surface skim them out, allowing the excess water to drain, and place them in a serving bowl. Serve covered with freshly made tomato sauce and grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.

Translator's note: Traditionally the cooked potatoes were put through a sieve; in the name of expediency a potato ricer or food mill can be used.



Piemonte Pinot nero



Gnocchi al tonno (salsa per) Tuna Sauce for Potato Gnocchi

Serves 6

Preparation: 20 minutes

Cooking time: ½ hour

100g (3 oz) tuna in oil (drained weight) – 2 onions – 50g (¼ cup) butter – 1 small bunch of parsley – 75ml (5 tablespoons) tomato paste

A casserole, a plate, a knife, a fork, a skimmer.

Melt the butter in the skillet and add the chopped onion. When the onion is lightly browned add the chopped parsley and stir. Using a fork, break the tuna into fragments on the plate and then add it to the pan together with the tomato paste. Cook for a few more minutes, and then serve over cooked gnocchi.



Langhe Chardonnay





“Macaron del frèt” Handmade Macaroni

Serves 6

Preparation: 1 hour

Cooking time: 15 minutes

400g (4 cups) flour – 2 eggs – water – pinch of salt – meat or tomato sauce, according to preference – grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

A deep saucepan, a skimmer, a bowl, a metal rod about 3mm ($\frac{1}{8}$ inch) thick by 15cm (6 inches) long.

Combine the flour, eggs, salt and a little water, and knead until smooth. Cut the dough into pieces roughly 2x5cm (1x2 inches). Place the metal rod in the middle of a piece of dough and carefully roll it around the rod to form a tube. Carefully slip the rod out, maintaining the shape. Cook the *macaron* in boiling salted water, stirring gently, for 15 minutes.

Remove them with a skimmer and transfer to a serving dish. In another serving dish alternate layers of meat or tomato sauce, the macaroni and Parmesan cheese. Mix together and serve hot.



Piemonte Barbera

Translator’s note: A clean knitting needle (*fret*, in the dialect of Alba) works well to form the pasta. Despite the name, the shape of this pasta is more similar to short *bucatini* or *fusilli bucati*.



Brodo Broth

Serves 6

Cooking time: 5 hours

2kg (4½ lbs) lean beef rump – 6 litres (6 quarts) water – 1 onion – 3 celery stalks – 1 sprig rosemary – 3 basil leaves – salt

A large pot, a ladle, a skimmer, a colander, a soup tureen.

Place the meat and other ingredients in the pot with water and salt and bring to the boil. Boil gently for five hours, skimming occasionally. Strain and serve very hot.

Translator’s note: By using lean meat in this recipe, one can serve the broth as soon as it is ready, bypassing a step where it cools down in order to skim off any fat. By comparison, the broth obtained in the recipe for *Bolliti* (see page 134) requires the extra step of cooling it so the fat rises to the top and can subsequently be easily skimmed off before proceeding to use the broth in other recipes.



Dolcetto d’Alba





Minestra del “Bate ’l gran” Threshers’ Soup

Serves 5

Preparation and cooking

Condiment: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

1 litre (1 quart) beef broth – 1 onion – 200g (scant 1/2 lb) chicken livers – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 15ml (1 tablespoon) tomato paste – 200g (scant 1/2 lb) small pasta – salt

A large soup pot, a skillet, a cutting board, a sharp knife, a spoon.

Use the excellent broth obtained from long-simmered beef, as in the previous recipe. Keep the broth hot. Finely chop the livers and brown them in a bit of olive oil; set aside. Chop the onion and gently sauté it. Add the sautéed onion and the browned livers to the broth. Put a ladle of hot broth in a cup and dissolve the tomato paste in it. Add it to the pot of broth, along with the pasta, and cook until the pasta is tender but not mushy. Serve hot.

Imagine the threshing machine in the farmyard: dust everywhere, tired men. When they came into the kitchen this soup was waiting for them, perfect to relieve their dry dusty throats and to prepare their stomachs for a good lunch. As they came into the kitchen the pasta was added (originally this was the bits of pasta dough remaining from making fresh tagliatelle) and the soup was ready.



Dolcetto d’Alba



My good friend and co-author Beppe Lodi says that food has an undeniable power to evoke images and memories. In fact, whenever I taste or merely think about this soup my imagination inevitably transports me back to my childhood and youth, times when the threshing of grain in the farmyard was both an exhausting and fun event.

It was a time which longer exists due to the big modern machines farms now employ and our tendency to do everything quickly; there is no longer a sense of enthusiasm for group work. I was fascinated even by the very start of the “show”: the thresher being hauled up the narrow road by oxen stomping in the dust, backs arching under the strain. The men, sweating under the blazing sun, coaxed the beasts with hoarse voices, at times even pushing them where the path was more difficult. When the machine was finally in place in the farmyard, and I had taken my place to watch on the doorstep of the farmhouse – part spellbound, part afraid – the men’s hard workday would begin. The dust would grow thicker and thicker with the heavy dull rhythm of the machine and the yard was filled with a cacophony of voices from everyone participating, from the owners to the workers to the neighbours who were pitching in. Meanwhile, in the kitchen, the women went on more quietly with their own work, which had begun the day before: preparations for lunch, a snack or dinner, depending on which part of the day that particular farm was using the thresher. Theirs was also a substantial and tiring undertaking, but also competitive, because whatever was consumed would be remembered in future seasons: “What a roast....!” “What a rabbit...!” “Such wine...!”

But with their throats irritated and parched after hours of inhaling the dust (which even a handkerchief kept over the mouth could not adequately filter), how could the men even eat? Enter this soup! And really, here is where this soup is so important. A hearty broth with chicken livers and bits of pasta, it was light and flowed easily down the throat to clean it for the boiled meats which followed. Little by little the men’s energy flowed back, and with the help of some good wine their voices became happier, some songs were sung, and everyone basked in the glow of satisfaction of a job well done.

At the end of the long day, when the great thresher had gone and the farmhands were having their last drinks, the proprietor recounted his sacks of grain and by then I was already sound asleep, dreaming of heroic adventures.



*Minestrone di ceci
e di costine di maiale*
Chickpea Soup with Pork Ribs

Serves 4

Preparation: 12 hours

Cooking time: 2 hours

500g (2½ cups) dried chickpeas – 9g (2 teaspoons) bicarbonate of soda – water – 1 onion, chopped – 1 small bunch fresh parsley, finely chopped – a handful of dried mushrooms, soaked, drained and chopped – 15ml (1 tablespoon) tomato paste – 800g (1¾ lbs) pork ribs – 4 potatoes, coarsely chopped – *crostini* [toasted cubes of bread] – grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

Two pots, a saucepan, a ladle, a sharp knife or *mezzaluna*, a cutting board, a strainer or colander.

Soak the chickpeas in warm water with the bicarbonate of soda for about 12 hours. Bring them to a boil in the same water, cooking until almost tender. Drain them and transfer to a pot of boiling salted water.

In a saucepan sauté the onion in a bit of extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil, add the parsley, mushrooms and tomato paste. Stir well and add this mixture to the pot of chickpeas and boiling water. Add the ribs and the potatoes. Cook slowly for 2 hours, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking and to help break up the potatoes. Serve with the *crostini* and grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.



Barbera d'Alba



Up until the late 1800's and early 1900's many farm families traditionally slaughtered a pig around the time of *Carnevale*. The usual bland diet was thus notably enlivened; starting out with preparation of the choicest cuts and gradually moving on to the less interesting parts, which, however, when well-prepared were equally appreciated and flavourful. Spare ribs are a good example of these, to which other ingredients (chickpeas in this case) were added. The chickpeas themselves were the fruit of patient labour, having been tied in bunches to be dried hanging throughout the autumn from the tallest stakes in the vineyard. The two ingredients are well-paired since the chickpeas soften while slowly cooking in the bit of fat released from the ribs, melding with the other flavours.



Minestrone di fave Fava Bean Soup

Serves 6

Cooking time: 3 hours

1 kg (2¹/₄ lbs) fresh fava beans – water – 200g (1/2 inch thick) slice *lardo* Piedmontese or Valdostano – 1 onion – 3 celery stalks – 1 carrot – 2 courgettes – 3 medium potatoes – salt to taste – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 200g (7 oz) homemade *lasagnòt* [ribbon pasta] – grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

A large pot, a sharp knife, a ladle.

Remove the fresh fava beans from their pods; toss them in boiling water for 2-3 minutes and drain. Run under cold water and remove the thin light green shell from each bean. Put the beans in boiling water. Dice the onion, celery, carrot, courgettes, and potatoes. Add these to the boiling water and beans together with the *lardo* and salt and cook until the beans are soft and broken up. Add the pasta and cook until tender. Serve with a drizzle of olive oil and abundant grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.



Barbera d'Alba

Translator's note: Fava beans are sometimes referred to as broad beans.



Polenta Polenta

Serves 6

Cooking time: 30-40 minutes

1 kg (5 cups) polenta flour – 2 litres (2 quarts) water – salt

A large copper pot, a wooden spoon, a wooden cutting board, a length of heavy thread.

Use the best quality polenta flour available.

Put as much salt in the water as for cooking pasta, and bring to a boil. Slowly sprinkle in the polenta flour, stirring constantly with the wooden spoon. Cook 30-40 minutes, stirring the whole time, until the mixture is thickened and smooth. Pour onto the board and, when slightly cooled, cut into slices using a length of thread.

Translator's note: Most people today use a dinner knife rather than a length of thread to slice cooled polenta.



Barbera d'Alba aged 2-3 years





Polenta al cavolo Polenta with Cabbage

Serves 6

Preparation: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 90 minutes

1 small green cabbage, chopped into small pieces – 4 potatoes, peeled and cubed – 2 carrots, peeled and cubed – 300g (2 cups) fresh beans, such as *borlotti* – 1 onion, chopped – 1 celery stalk, chopped – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – salt – 200g (scant 1¹/₄ cups) polenta flour.

A deep pot, a ladle, 6 soup plates.

Shell the beans and set aside. Fill the pot halfway with cold water; add salt and 30ml (2 tablespoons) of oil, the cabbage, potatoes, carrot and onion, beans, and celery. Correct the salt. Bring to a boil and reduce the heat, cooking for about 45 minutes without letting it become too thick. Slowly sprinkle in the polenta flour, stirring constantly. Cook another 45 minutes, stirring frequently to avoid sticking or lumps. Pour into soup plates and serve hot.



Barbera d'Alba aged 2-3 years



“Puccia” Polenta with Cabbage and Pork

Serves 4

Cooking time: 1¹/₂ hours

2 litres (2 quarts) water – 500g (generous 1 lb) boneless marbled pork, diced – 1 cabbage, cubed – 500g (3 cups) polenta flour

A large pot, a knife, a wooden spoon.

Put the water into the saucepan and add salt as for cooking pasta. Add the pork and cabbage. Bring to a boil and cook halfway, about 45 minutes. While stirring, sprinkle in the polenta flour and continue cooking, stirring constantly, for another 45 minutes. Remove from heat. This polenta can be served and enjoyed two ways: either served hot in soup plates or, once cooled, cut into slices and fried in a skillet.



Dolcetto d'Alba





Polenta con "bagna d'infern"
Polenta Baked with Hot Sauce

Serves 4-6

Preheat oven to 200°C/400°F/gas mark 6

Cooking times: for the sauce: 1½ hours,
for the polenta: 1 hour,
to bake in the oven: 30 minutes

11-13 garlic cloves (4-5 crushed and 7-8 thinly sliced) – 12 anchovies in salt, well rinsed and bones removed – 1 cup extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 4 or 5 fresh or canned tomatoes, peeled – parsley – 1 whole chilli pepper – 2 hardboiled eggs, sieved – polenta (see page 71)

A *dianèt* [terracotta casserole], a chopping knife or *mezzaluna*, a cutting board, a *dobiòn* [sieve], a copper saucepan, a wooden cutting board, a length of heavy thread, a terracotta baking dish.

In the *dianèt* cook the oil with all the garlic and the anchovies for an hour slowly over extremely low heat to avoid burning. Chop the tomatoes, parsley and chilli pepper and add to mixture. Cook for another half hour and add the hardboiled sieved eggs.

Cut the polenta, prepared earlier and left to cool, horizontally into at least 3 thick layers. Spoon a thin layer of the sauce into the bottom of the oven dish. Place a slice of polenta on top and continue alternating the sauce with the polenta, ending with the sauce. Bake in the preheated oven for 20 minutes, then reduce to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4 for the remaining 10 minutes. Serve hot.



Barbera d'Alba aged 3 years



Polenta con merluzzo al verde
Polenta and Cod with Parsley Sauce

Serves 5

Soaking: 12 hours for cod, changing the water frequently
Preparation: 20 minutes

Cooking times: for the cod: 30 minutes
for the sauce: 45 minutes
for the polenta: 1 hour (see page 71)

1 kg (2¼ lbs) dried salt cod – 200g (2 cups) flour – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil for frying, plus 120ml (scant ½ cup) – 1 small onion – 20g (½ cup) fresh parsley leaves – 2-4 plum tomatoes – 2-4 garlic cloves (according to personal taste) – 500g (3 cups) polenta flour

A large bowl, a chef's knife, a large heavy skillet, a terracotta casserole, a large fork, a spoon.

After having soaked the cod for 12 hours, skin it and cut it into pieces. Pat dry and dust with flour, and deep fry in olive oil. When golden, remove to paper towel to drain and set aside, keeping warm.

Using a large sharp knife finely chop the onion, parsley, tomatoes and garlic. Add the 120ml (½ cup) olive oil and blend. Sauté the mixture until the liquid from the tomatoes is absorbed. Add the cod and heat thoroughly so the cod is covered with the sauce. Serve hot with the polenta.

Dried salt cod was rather inexpensive and could be kept hanging in the cellar for long periods. It was a flavourful condiment for polenta and easy to obtain. To make polenta the pot sat on the stove and the housewife stirred the mixture with a wooden baton (not a spoon). A *palot* [a small spatula-like wooden utensil] was held over the pot in the other hand to sprinkle in the polenta flour as the pot was stirred.

Each turn of the spoon and a bit more polenta flour was added to the mixture, gradually and simply, without any fancy mechanical gadget.



Barbera d'Alba aged 2 or 3 years





Polenta con merluzzo e cipolle Polenta with Cod and Onions

Serves 5

Soaking: 12 hours for the cod, changing the water frequently

Preparation: 20 minutes

Cooking time for the cod: 30 minutes

for the onions: 40 minutes

for the polenta: 1 hour (see page 71)

1 kg (2¹/₄ lbs) dried salt cod – flour – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 500g (generous 1 lb) onions, sliced – 500g (3 cups) polenta flour

A skillet, a large fork, a spoon.

Soak, cut, flour and fry cod as in the previous recipe. Slice the onions and sauté until golden brown. Add the cod and heat thoroughly. Serve hot over the polenta, previously cooked and cut into slices.



Barbera d'Alba aged 2 or 3 years



Polenta con tartara salata Polenta with Sheep's Milk Sauce

Serves 6

Preparation: 1 hour

Cooking time: 1 hour

Cooking time for polenta: 1 hour

1 medium onion, finely chopped – 4 eggs – 700ml (3 cups) sheep's milk – 12g (2 tablespoons) flour – 50g (¹/₄ cup) butter – salt and pepper – 500g (3 cups) polenta flour

A saucepan, a double boiler, a whisk, a *dianèt* [terracotta bowl], a wooden cutting board, a large pot.

In the saucepan sauté medium-low heat the onion in the butter, and salt to taste, taking care not to burn the butter. Set aside to cool. In the bowl beat the egg whites, then whisk in the yolks. Pour the eggs into the double boiler and as they heat add the cooled onions, milk, pepper to taste, and flour. Blend well, stirring constantly until creamy. Serve hot over the polenta on the wooden board.

Translator's note: If sheep's milk is unavailable, cow's milk or goat's milk may be substituted. However this will impart a different flavour on the dish.



Barbera d'Alba aged 2 or 3 years





Polenta saracena Buckwheat Polenta

Serves 8

Preparation: 1/2 hour

Cooking times: for the polenta: 1 hour
for the sauce: 1/2 hour

1 1/2 kg (3 1/3 lbs) peeled potatoes – 300g (3 cups) flour – 125g (3/4 cup) buckwheat flour – 60ml (1/4 cup) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 50g (1/4 cup) butter – 500g (generous 1 lb) finely sliced leeks – 1 litre (1 quart) milk, warmed – salt – pepper.

A large pot, a long-handled wooden spoon, a saucepan, a wooden cutting board, a wooden spoon.

Put the potatoes in the pot and cover with water. Cook until almost tender and add all of the buckwheat flour and all but 12g (1 tablespoon) of the flour. Boil gently for one hour, stirring and breaking up the potatoes until the mixture is smooth. Add salt to taste and pour onto the cutting board.

Heat the oil and butter in the saucepan and add the leeks. Add salt and pepper to taste and the remaining 12g (1 tablespoon) of flour. Continue cooking, slowly adding the heated milk until a dense sauce is obtained.



Langhe Freisa

Cut the warm polenta into slices and serve with the warm sauce.

Translator's note: Despite the lack of polenta flour the consistency of this dish is not dissimilar to that of true polenta; this is because of the buckwheat flour.



“Ris e còi” Rice With Cabbage

Serves 6

Preparation: 2 hours

Cooking time: 2 1/2 hours

1 large cabbage, finely cut – 1/2 onion, finely chopped – 30ml (2 tablespoons) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 6mm (1/4 inch) slice *lardo* Piedmontese or Valdostano, cut into cubes – 270g (1 1/4 cups) raw rice – 200g (1 cup) grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese or shredded *toma* from Piedmont – 10g (2 teaspoons) salt – 2g (1/2 teaspoon) ground pepper – approximately 1g (1-2 teaspoons) fresh parsley leaves, chopped.

A large bowl, a large pot with lid, a knife, a wooden spoon, a ladle.

Soak the finely cut cabbage in a bowl of water. Brown the onion in the oil with the *lardo*. Drain the cabbage and add it, still dripping, to the onion mixture. Stir well with a wooden spoon, and when the cabbage is just wilted cover and cook over low heat for half an hour. Add 1 litre (1 quart) of water and bring to a boil. Add the rice, cheese, salt, pepper, and parsley. Cook until the rice is tender and serve.



Dolcetto d'Alba

Translator's note: *Toma* is the general name given to a cheese usually made from a blend of cow's and sheep's milk. There are as many types as there are villages, and it can be eaten as a fresh cheese or aged. Here the reference is to its aged form, so it has a medium-hard texture.





Lasagne al sangue Lasagne with Sweetbreads, Sausage Meat and Rosemary

Serves 6

Preparation for sauce: 1½ hours

Preparation and cooking time for lasagne: 30 minutes

½ onion – 2.5g (1 tablespoon) finely chopped rosemary leaves – 2.5g (1 tablespoon) fresh parsley – 250g (8 oz) pork spinal cord – 300g (10 oz) mixed pork sweetbreads – 250g (9 oz) pork sausage meat – 600g (scant 1½ lbs) home-made lasagne or other broad flat noodles such as *pappardelle* (see recipe for “*tajarin*”, page 58) – 750ml (3 cups) fresh pork blood – 150ml (⅔ cup) milk – grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese

Two large pots, one particularly deep, a saucepan, a large spoon.

Finely chop the onion, rosemary and parsley and sauté in the saucepan along with the spinal cord, sweetbreads and sausage meat. Cook until golden.

Cook the pasta in abundant salted water until *al dente*, only about 2-3 minutes, and drain. Immediately transfer it into a large pot with the blood and milk. Continue stirring over slow heat and add the meat mixture.

Cook until the whole mixture takes on a brownish colour. Serve immediately with a good sprinkling of grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese

Translator’s note: This recipe is, for today’s average cook, almost a virtual impossibility being that it uses ingredients that although also uncommon 100 years ago, were at least easier to come by in a rural setting.



Nebbiolo d’Alba



Lasagne al Sangue and Oriòn

Many traditional dishes popular today from Alba and the surrounding area date back to the 17th century, a period of intense creativity both in customs and in the arts, but also a time when poverty aggravated by widespread epidemics made life more difficult than it already was for the poorer classes. Working the fields and vegetable gardens at times yielded so little that it was necessary to prepare meals with ingredients and procedures, at times to using things which if given the choice, probably would not have been thought of as acceptable or even tried in the first place. The resulting inventive cuisine has proven resistant over time in certain areas, albeit with modifications and improvements. The present dish, along with *Oriòn* (which is also from the 1600’s) are both featured in winter meals, in part because January and February are the months when farms slaughter pigs and so it is easier to procure the main ingredients.

This lasagne dish is typical of the Alba area mainly because people here still remember the traditions involved in its preparation. In the nearby hills of the Langhe, meanwhile, one can still find another dish where the primary ingredient is pork blood: the *Torta di Sangue* [Black Pudding] (page 145), which actually looks more like a brownish frittata. The main difference is that over time the former added other ingredients such as the spinal cord, sweetbreads and sausage meat.

What should be taken into consideration is the period in which these two dishes were invented. The nobility owned the pigs and when the animals were butchered they permitted the leftovers and least appealing parts of the animal to be distributed among the workers and servants; this included the blood and what today is considered offal. The necessity of using these and to transform them into something more appetizing led to dishes like those mentioned here. The lasagne in their current version constitute a dish which is harmonious, rich, and soft and inviting with its homemade pasta, and the blood with the addition of other ingredients which render it quite tasty.

The recipe for *Oriòn* (see page 141) has likewise evolved through the years into its present form through the addition of modest ingredients (garlic, anchovies, parsley, rosemary, onion, vinegar, peppers) to its principal ingredients of pig’s ear and cheeks. The resulting dish is distinctive, spicy and flavourful. Today we serve it hot in order to truly savour the dish. But it is easy to think back to economically difficult times when, to make it last as long as possible, the leftovers were eaten the next day. When cooled, it became dense and was cut into slices and layered with bell peppers. I still have fond memories of eating it this way with the farm families of our hillsides.



“*Supa mitonà*”
Broth and Bread Soup

Serves 4

Cooking time: ½ hour

400g (scant 1 lb) bread, cut into 10mm (½ inch) thick slices – butter – 1 onion, finely chopped – 1 sprig of rosemary – 15ml (1 tablespoon) tomato paste – 1 litre (1 quart) beef, chicken or vegetable broth – grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

A casserole, a spoon, a fork.

Melt the butter in the casserole and brown the slices of bread in it; set aside. In the same pan, adding more butter if necessary, brown the onion with the rosemary and add the tomato sauce. Add the slices of bread and pour in the broth. Cook for 30 minutes over low heat. Just before serving sprinkle with the Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.



Dolcetto d’Alba



Frittata con l’erba di San Pietro
Frittata with Costmary

Serves 4

Preparation: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

1 small bunch of costmary – 1 bunch of mixed fresh herbs, the same quantity as the costmary – 4 eggs – salt – 30g (2 tablespoons) butter – 30ml (2 tablespoons) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – a handful of grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

A heavy skillet, a sharp knife or *mezzaluna*, a fork, a plate.

Finely chop the costmary, then the other herbs. Whisk the eggs, add salt and the cheese, and mix in the costmary and the other herbs. Melt the butter and oil in the skillet over high heat and pour in the mixture. Shake the skillet continually to prevent sticking, occasionally lifting up the edges. When cooked, slide onto a dinner plate, add a bit more oil and butter to the skillet and turn the frittata face down back into the pan. When it is cooked turn out of the pan and serve at once.

Translator’s note: Costmary (*Tanacetum balsamita*) is also known as Alecost.



Dolcetto di Diano d’Alba





Frittata “Rognosa” “Capricious” Frittata

Serves 4

Preparation: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

150g (¾ cup) chopped *salame cotto* – 150g (¾ cup) leftover roast veal, chopped – 4 eggs – salt – 30g (2 tablespoons) butter – 30 ml (2 tablespoons) or more extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – a handful grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

A heavy skillet, a fork, a plate.

Proceed as for the preceding recipe, substituting finely chopped meats for the herbs. Serve hot.



Dolcetto d'Alba



This flavourful frittata reminds me of a story told to me when I was a child by Vigiù, one of the workers on my family’s farm. He was very wise, witty, and patient with children. At dusk we would gather around him in the farmyard to listen, silent and attentive, while he calmly and slowly told us stories. He knew when to pause dramatically and was able to model his voice according to the characters: witches, wizards, hungry wolves, pirates and thieves. Sometimes the shadow play from the moonlight outlined strange figures and movements, causing me to tremble. I would move closer to him, stealthily so as not to be noticed.

There is one tale, among the others, which I’m sure many people in Alba still remember: it tells of a wide deep precipice near Treiso, about five miles from Alba, in which there are seven gullies with sheer drops into the deep darkness beneath. This place is called “*Rocche dei Sette Fratelli*” [The Seven Brothers Gorge]. The legend, which so fascinated me as a child, is as follows.

A long, long time ago near Treiso there lived six brothers and a sister. They were all tireless workers and were very attached to their land; it was their whole world. One day, all the brothers went to work in a splendid field of which they were extremely proud. They asked their sister to prepare a meat frittata (the above recipe, Capricious Frittata, to be precise) for their breakfast. It was a Friday, the day of abstinence, when every good Christian knows that meat cannot be eaten. (Even I as a small child knew this, having learned it from the nuns at the nursery school. I did not like the cod that was served at lunch in place of meat and often would refuse to eat it.) The sister reminded her brothers of this and tried to convince them not to sin by eating meat, but they wouldn’t listen to her. So the frittata was prepared. But, before they could even serve themselves, the field opened up and they all disappeared into the gorge. The brothers were never heard from again but the sister was saved by a rocky ledge which can still be seen today, as can the deep white canyon. It stands as a warning to sinners, who, today, are indifferent to many more things than mere dietary abstinences.



Frittata di cipolle Onion Frittata

Serves 6

Preparation: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

4 medium onions – 20-30ml (2-3 tablespoons) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – salt – 45g (1/4 cup) grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese – 6 eggs

A heavy skillet, a plate, a fork.

Slice the onions and brown them slightly in the skillet in a bit of oil. Beat the eggs, add salt to taste, add the browned onion and the grated cheese and pour the mixture back into the hot skillet. Cook slowly and turn the frittata over a couple of times with the help of a plate, as in the previous recipe. Serve hot.



Dolcetto d'Alba



Lumache "Bagnà 'nt l'òli" Snails Dipped in Oil

Serves 4

Preparation: Purge the snails for 3 days

Cooking time: 3 hours

48 edible snails (*helix pomatia*) – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – lemon – rosemary – bay leaves – 1 garlic clove – carrot – onion – salt – pepper

A large pot, 4 dishes, a skimmer.

Close the snails in a basket for three days to purge (see below), rinse them in cold water then put them into a pot full of boiling salted water with some rosemary, celery, bay leaves, garlic, carrot, onion and pepper. Cook for three hours.

Remove the snails from their shells while still hot. The hepatopancreas comes away easily with a little fork (in the past simply a nail was used). Dip the snails in a mixture of lemon juice, olive oil, salt and pepper and serve.

Translator's note: Snails (*Helix pomatia*) can be bought at specialty stores, already purged. Snails which require purging should be prepared by closing them in a container with a perforated bottom which allows for drainage. Leave them without food or water for 3 days. Rinse well in cold water and proceed as indicated in the recipe.



Verduno Pelaverga





Frittata di lumache Snail Frittata

Serves 4

Preparation: 3 days for the snails to purge

Cooking time (snails): 3 hours

Cooking time (frittata): 1/2 hour

24 edible snails (*helix pomatia*) – 4 eggs – 1 bunch of parsley – 1 onion, chopped – 1 garlic clove, crushed – salt

A saucepan, a heavy skillet, a fork, a chopping knife or *mezzaluna*, a knife.

After keeping the snails closed in a basket for 3 days to purge, boil them for three hours, then extract them from the shells and finely chop them. Whisk the eggs and mix in the snails, chopped parsley, onion and the garlic clove. Add salt to taste and proceed as for the *Frittata con l'erba di San Pietro* (see page 83).

Translator's note: Snails (*Helix pomatia*) can be bought at specialty stores, already purged. Snails which require purging should be prepared by closing them in a container with a perforated bottom which allows for drainage. Leave them without food or water for 3 days. Rinse well in cold water and proceed as indicated in the recipe.



Langhe Nebbiolo



Lumache fritte Fried Snails

Serves 4

Preparation: 3 days to purge

Cooking time (snails): 3 hours

Cooking time (frittata): 1/2 hour

48 edible snails (*helix pomatia*) – 2 eggs, beaten – breadcrumbs – pepper – salt – 1 litre (1 quart) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil

A heavy skillet, a skimmer, paper towel.

Purge the snails (see below), boil them for 3 hours, extract from the shells, and dry them well. Dip them into the egg and roll them in breadcrumbs which have been seasoned with ground pepper. Heat the oil in the skillet and fry the snails until they are golden. Drain on the paper towel, sprinkle with salt to taste and serve immediately.

Translator's note: Snails (*Helix pomatia*) can be bought at specialty stores, already purged. Snails which require purging should be prepared by closing them in a container with a perforated bottom which allows for drainage. Leave them without food or water for 3 days. Rinse well in cold water and proceed as indicated in the recipe.



Dolcetto di Dogliani





“Caponèt” Stuffed Zucchini Flowers

Serves 4

Preparation: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

16 zucchini flowers – 300g (1²/₃ cups) cooked ground beef – 100g (3 oz) *salame cotto* – 20g (1/2 cup) fresh parsley leaves, chopped – 1 garlic clove – 2 eggs – 45g (1/4 cup) grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese – oil for frying

A large bowl, a heavy skillet, a spoon, a chopping knife or *mezzaluna*, a cutting board.

Discard the pistil from each flower. Combine all the ingredients except the oil and the zucchini flowers. Mix well and carefully stuff the flowers. Fry until golden in very hot oil and drain on paper towel. Serve immediately.

Caponèt is another invention of our gastronomic dialect. This time there is some logic, in that it derives from the Italian word for capon, “*cappone*”. It is generally accepted knowledge that of the two types of flowers on the zucchini plant, the one that grows alone (that is, not on the end of a squash) is tastier. However, this is the flower that has not been pollinated, which means the filling is put into a sterile flower, just as the capon is sterile by virtue of having been castrated. In addition, by Christmas the capon is quite a plump bird, as are the flowers once they have been stuffed. Hence another example of something seemingly gastronomically unimportant, like a flower, being put to good use and resulting in a very tasty dish.



Dolcetto d'Alba



Cipolle ripiene Stuffed Onions

Serves 4

Preparation: 45 minutes

Preheat oven to 190°C/375°F/gas mark 5

Cooking time: 30 minutes

5 medium onions – 300g (1¹/₄ cups) leftover beef or veal roast – 85g (3oz) *salame cotto* – 2 garlic cloves, crushed – 2 eggs – a small bunch of parsley – bread crumbs – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil

A saucepan, an oven dish, a fork, a knife.

Parboil the onions. Cut them in half horizontally, scoop out the centre and set aside. Chop each ingredient separately (the roast, *salame*, the onion centres, the garlic, and parsley). Whisk the eggs. Combine all the chopped ingredients with the eggs and mix well. Fill the onions with this mixture and sprinkle with breadcrumbs. Put them into the well-greased oven dish and bake for approximately 40 minutes or until they are golden brown. Serve warm.



Dolcetto d'Alba





“Grive” della Langa Mock Stuffed “Grive”

Serves 4

Preparation: 1 hour

Cooking time: 1 hour

200g (scant 1/2 lb) pork liver – 200g (scant 1/2 lb) boneless pork rump – 2 eggs – salt – pepper – 7.5g (2 tablespoons) breadcrumbs – 45g (1/4 cup) grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese – half a nutmeg, finely grated – 20 juniper berries, crushed – a 1x1m (3x3 feet) sheet of pork caul – 40g (3 tablespoons) butter – 40ml (1/4 cup) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil

A roasting pan with lid, a fork, a knife.

Mince the pork liver and rump and mix together. Add the eggs, salt to taste, a pinch of pepper, the breadcrumbs, grated cheese, grated nutmeg and the crushed juniper berries. Make little bundles, approximately 7x5cm (3x2 inches) and wrap them in the caul. Put them in the pan with the butter and oil, cover and cook slowly for about one hour.



Roero



These bundles are not birds, as the Piedmontese name “grive” [thrushes] would indicate. They are little bundles enclosed in *risèla* [pork caul]. This mixture of liver and meat mixed with the other ingredients, especially the juniper berries, results in something similar to the typical flavour of cooked thrushes in *Risotto con le “grive”* (recipe page 56) because the birds feed on juniper berries, imparting the meat with a distinctive flavour.

This is another dish from the 1600s, an era of diffused poverty in the Langhe area. It is easy to see that once again poorer ingredients are used, while the real *grive* were probably only affordable by the wealthy. Apparently the two *grive* recipes, real and mock, are almost a gastronomic joke, whose condiment is more about irony than envy. With the passing of time, of course, this flavourful bundle has been modified, becoming richer and spicier. In 1962, the culinary competition *Piatto d’Oro* was won by Ercole Oliveri from Cortemilia (a town in the Langhe) with this very dish.

Translator’s note: As a substitute for pork caul (the external layer of the pig’s stomach), very thin slices of pancetta or *lardo* can be used to wrap the bundles.



“Frisse” Mixed Pork Bundles

Serves 6

Preparation: 40 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

300g (10 oz) lean pork – 150g (5 oz) pork lung – 150g (5 oz) pork liver – 100g (3 oz) pork heart – 200g (scant 8 oz) sausage meat – salt – pepper – nutmeg – 1 egg – a handful grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese – a 1x1m (3x3 foot) sheet pork caul – 40g (3 tablespoons) butter

A heavy skillet, a serving fork.

Coarsely chop all the meat. Remove the sausage from its casing and add it to the other meat. Add the pepper, salt and nutmeg. Mix well with the egg and grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese. Shape the mixture into little balls and wrap them in the caul. Melt the butter and gently brown on all sides. Serve immediately.

Translator’s note: As a substitute for pork caul very thin slices of pancetta or *lardo* can be used as a wrapping. Also, in the past this dish was prepared by browning the bundles in a small quantity of *sugna*, or pork suet. Though it is tasty and confers a crunchy texture, it is hard to find outside of Italy and here has been substituted with butter.



Nebbiolo d’Alba



Frittura dolce Deep-fried Sweet Semolina Squares

Serves 8

Preparation: 5 minutes

Cooking times: semolina, $\frac{3}{4}$ hour; frying,
20 minutes

Cooling time: 5 hours

1 litre (1 quart) milk – 50g (4 tablespoons) semolina – 4 egg yolks – 50g (4 tablespoons) sugar – a pinch of salt – grated peel of $\frac{1}{4}$ lemon – 2 egg whites – breadcrumbs – oil for frying

A saucepan, a rectangular cake mould, a serving plate, a wooden spoon, a knife, a heavy skillet, paper towel.

Heat the milk and slowly add the semolina, sugar and salt, stirring constantly. When the mixture comes to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 45 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and add the egg yolks and lemon peel. Pour in the mixture into a greased rectangular cake mould.

When cooled and set, cut into diamonds 5cm (2 inches) per side. Dip into the whisked egg whites, coat in breadcrumbs, and fry in hot oil. Drain on the paper towel and serve.

Translator’s note: This is a delicate, traditional, sweet dish which accompanies the other savoury parts of a Piedmontese *fritto misto*. It is generally not eaten as a dessert.



Nebbiolo d’Alba





“Batsoà” Langa Pork Hocks

Serves 4

Preparation: 1 hour

Cooking time: 3 hours to cook the pork hocks, plus 30 minutes to fry them.

4 pork hocks – water – salt – vinegar – 1 onion – 4 or 5 cloves – 2.5g (1 teaspoon) ground cinnamon – 1 or 2 eggs – breadcrumbs – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil for frying

A saucepan, a heavy skillet with lid, a serving fork, a knife.

Scrape and rinse the pork hocks well. Put them into the saucepan and cover with equal amounts of salted water and vinegar. Add the onion, cloves and cinnamon and cook covered at a low simmer for 3 hours. Drain and when cooled dip them into the whisked egg and coat with breadcrumbs. Deep fry in hot oil until golden brown. Serve immediately.

Translator’s note: The use of a splatter screen is strongly recommended during frying. The name *Batsoà* is the pronunciation in the Piedmontese dialect for the French *bas-de-soie* [silk stockings], and it is a humorous allusion to the pork hocks.



Nebbiolo d’Alba



Funghi fritti Fried Porcini Mushrooms

Serves 4

Preparation time: 35 minutes

Cooking time: 12 minutes

500g (generous 1 lb) medium-sized porcini mushrooms – flour – 1 egg, whisked – breadcrumbs – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil for frying

A dish towel, a small knife, a big knife, a heavy skillet, paper towel.

Select medium sized mushrooms and clean the stalk well then pat dry with a cloth. Separate the stalks from the heads; the stalks can be set aside and used to make sauce for tagliatelle. Cut the tops into approximately 1cm (1/2 inch) thick slices. Dust them with flour, dip into the whisked egg, and coat with breadcrumbs. Deep fry in hot oil until golden. Drain them on paper towel, sprinkle with salt and serve hot.

Translator’s note: The use of a splatter screen is strongly recommended during frying.



Piemonte Grignolino





Fritto misto Fritto Misto

Serves 5

Preparation: 1½ hours

Cooking time: 30 minutes

250g (9 oz) lamb chops – 250g (9 oz) small veal chops – 150g (5 oz) veal brains – 150g (5 oz) veal sweetbreads – 150g (5 oz) veal spinal cord – 150g (5 oz) veal liver – 250g (9 oz) *batsòà* [pork hocks, see page 96] – 150g (5 oz) porcini mushrooms – 150g (5 oz) cauliflower florets – 200g (7 oz) sausage – 5 *frisse* [Mixed Pork Bundles, see page 94] – 2 apples – 3 carrots – 1 fennel – 2 zucchini – 5 *caponèt* [stuffed zucchini flowers, see page 90] – 2 artichokes – 1 aubergine (eggplant) – 5 potato croquettes – 10 semolina squares (see page 95) – flour – egg – breadcrumbs – oil

A deep heavy skillet, a serving fork, a serving plate, paper towel.

Each component of this dish must be previously cooked. Working in batches, roll each ingredient in flour, then dip in beaten egg and coat with breadcrumbs, gently shaking off the excess. Deep fry until golden. Drain on paper towel and serve hot.

For the Mixed Pork Bundles, Semolina Squares, *Caponèt* and *Batsòà*, see the respective preceding recipes.



Nebbiolo d'Alba



This is the most baroque of dishes found in the Langhe because of the abundance and variety of the rich-flavoured ingredients: sharp, sweet, tangy. Perhaps this opinion comes from my childhood experiences, since many things seen through the eyes of a child are in retrospect exaggerated.

Indeed, when I was quite young, my father often took me with him to wedding banquets. These country functions started at lunchtime and continued through the late evening when the guests would finally get up from the table on wobbly legs. For such an event months of preparation were required; local gastronomic experts were called in since the idea was to do more – and do it better – than anything which had come previously. My reactions during these banquets went from boredom to surprise, from astonishment to nodding off, but I never missed the applause signalling the arrival of the fritto misto, which was presented as a steaming, ostentatious monument to all farm products: veal, lamb, pork, sausages, vegetables, apples, sweets... We have stopped at 20 ingredients in our recipe, but there is always room to elaborate. The baroque Neapolitan poet Giovanbattista Marino once said, “The poet’s aim is to surprise”. Poetry is art, and art is also gastronomy.



Carpione di zucchini e uova Marinated Zucchini with Eggs

Serves 4

Preparation: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 40 minutes

600g (1²/₃ lbs) zucchini – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil for frying – 4 eggs – 3 garlic cloves – 2 sprigs sage – 150ml (2/3 cup) vinegar – salt

A deep, heavy skillet, a *basila* [a large, deep serving dish].

Use freshly picked small zucchini. Rinse, trim the ends, and cut into quarters lengthwise. Fry them a few at a time in the *peila* [skillet] and transfer to a serving dish. Drain most of the oil and then reheat to fry the eggs. Place the fried eggs on top of the zucchini. In the same pan sauté the garlic and sage; when the garlic is golden remove from heat and add the vinegar and salt. Return to heat and bring the mixture to a boil, stirring constantly. Pour it over the zucchini and eggs. Cover and serve when cooled. This dish can be stored several days in a cool place, not necessarily refrigerated.

Translator's note: Dishes which are prepared "*in carpione*" are stored in their marinade, which has a preserving effect as well as imparting a fresh, tart flavour.



Roero Arneis



Uova in camicia Poached Eggs with Tomato Sauce

Serves 4

Cooking and preparation: 50 minutes

water – salt – 30ml (2 tablespoons) vinegar – 4 eggs – 500 ml (2 cups) tomato sauce – 10g (1/4 cup) fresh basil leaves, chopped – 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped – 10g (1/2 cup) fresh parsley leaves – 1/2 onion, chopped – 75ml (5 tablespoons) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil

A deep pot, a heavy casserole, a skimmer, a warmed serving plate

In the casserole sauté the garlic and onions in olive oil until lightly golden. Add the tomato sauce, basil and parsley. Stir often, allowing to simmer slowly for 20-30 minutes. Remove the sauce from the heat and set aside, keeping it warm.

Heat the water with the salt and vinegar. When it boils, break the eggs one at a time into the water. While they are cooking, spoon the sauce into the warmed serving plate. Skim the eggs out when the whites are cooked firm and place them on the pool of tomato sauce. Serve hot.



Langhe Nebbiolo





“Bagna caoda” Bagna cauda

Serves 4

Preparation: ½ hour

Cooking time: 2 hours

About 10 large cloves of garlic – 240ml (1 cup) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 12 anchovies in salt, well rinsed and bones removed – 40g (3 tablespoons) butter – 2 cardoons – 4 bell peppers

A *dianèt* [heavy terracotta saucepan], a food warmer, a wooden spoon.

Clean, trim and slice the vegetables and set aside, keeping cool until ready to serve.

Crush 3 or 4 garlic cloves and thinly slice another 6 or 7. Put the garlic in a heavy saucepan with the olive oil and the anchovies and cook over extremely low heat, taking care that the garlic does not burn. After about two hours add the butter, stirring well until the butter has melted. Put the *dianèt* on the food warmer and place in the middle of the table to be served onto individual plates with the cardoons and peppers.



Langhe Freisa



This dish is particularly representative of the experience of eating together in the name of friendship. At the same time it is also the dish most likely to render newcomers nonplussed, though they are soon won over. Such a friendly atmosphere is created with the warm fragrant bagna cauda in the centre of the table and everybody happily dipping their vegetables and cleaning their plates with hunks of bread. It is all the more striking for its colours: the white cardoons together with the red and yellow peppers and a few bottles of inviting young sparkling red wine, usually the first *novello* of the year.

Eating this way invites togetherness. Everyone is seated around the *dianèt*, dipping, munching and chatting warmly – a true hymn to friendship. It also appropriately symbolizes the Langhe-Liguria ties: Ligurian oil and anchovies with the Langhe garlic, cardoons and peppers. For dipping these two vegetables are sufficient; bagna cauda is so simple and fragrant that other pairings would betray old rustic yet worthwhile traditions. This is why in general we say that this dish can only be served in November, when the main ingredients (cardoons, peppers, wine) are at their peak.



Asparagi al burro Asparagus with Butter

Serves 4

Preparation: 1 hour

Preheat oven to 220°C/425°F/gas mark 7

Cooking time: 25-30 minutes

1 kg (2¹/₄ lbs) asparagus – 100g (1/2 cup) butter, melted – salt – pepper
– 100g (1/2 cup) grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

A colander, a knife, a high sided pot with lid, an ovenproof serving dish.

Cut off the tough bottom part of each asparagus stalk and scrape the length without damaging the tip. Tie up in small bunches with cooking twine and stand them in boiling salted water so that only a third of the stalk is in water; the upper two thirds will cook by steam. Cover and cook for about 20 minutes. Drain in the colander and immediately immerse them in cold water while still in the colander. Drain well, remove the twine and place in the serving dish. Mix the melted butter with salt and pepper to taste and pour it over the asparagus. Heat in the oven for a few minutes. Generously sprinkle with Parmigiano-Reggiano just prior to serving.



Roero Arneis



When in season, asparagus seems to invade the markets in beautiful bunches of white or green, or even other colours, depending on the variety – all standing at attention like so many ranks of soldiers. Some are huge, some as small as a finger, but all are delicious either with melted butter or fonduta, or more simply and perhaps the best, with oil and lemon. Often it is disappointing to discover that the correlation between size, flavour, and tenderness is unreliable. This doesn't happen with the Roero variety, which is always consistent. Roero is another blessed area bordering the Langhe with its own age-old traditions and knowledgeable, generous, hard-working men. It is also the provenance of the delicious white wine Roero Arneis, and excellent accompaniment to asparagus born of the same land, sun and hard work.

Many asparagus lovers are perplexed about how to best cook this vegetable. I suggest cutting them all to the same length and standing them in the pot so that the boiling water covers the bottom one-third of the stalks, with the steam rising to the tips, allowing them to remain firm while maintaining flavour and colour.



Gelatina Aspic

Serves 8

Preparation: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 4 hours

Filtering time: 2 hours

5 litres (5 quarts) water – 4 veal hocks – 1 kg (2¹/₄ lbs) veal knuckle – carcass from 1 roast chicken – 1 large onion – 20 cloves – 5 fragments of stick cinnamon – 2-3 bay leaves – 3 celery stalks – 4 egg whites – 150ml (2/3 cup) vinegar – 75ml (1/3 cup) Marsala wine

A large saucepan, a skimmer, a colander with very small holes or a sieve, 2 *grilèt* [large bowls], cheesecloth, a wooden fork.

Clean the veal shanks well, split them in half lengthwise and put them in a large pot with the veal and chicken bones. Fill with enough water to cover and add the cinnamon, celery, and onion studded with the cloves. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to simmer gently for four hours, stirring often, until the liquid is reduced by half. Strain the broth and let cool. Skim off the fat and reheat.

Beat the egg whites and add them to the broth. Bring to a boil, remove from heat and add the vinegar and Marsala. Run the cheesecloth under water, wring out thoroughly and lay it across the top of a *grilèt*. Filter the broth and when cool enough place in the refrigerator to set.



Langhe Favorita



This dish can be served in any season but, since it so fresh it is especially appreciated in the summer. It can be kept for many days and so is useful as a reserve for unexpected occasions. Light yet hearty, it stimulates the appetite while being easily digestible.

Even long ago it was a dish which came in handy since, before the invention of the telephone, it was not always possible to know in advance when visitors would drop in. Storing it was problematic on the few old farms without a *l'crutin* [cool cellar]. Things improved with the invention of the domestic icebox and for a couple of coins ice could be bought which would keep food fresh for about a day. One only had to ensure that new ice was brought in every day.

I vividly remember the preparation of aspic as a serious endeavour in Nonna Genia's time. Everything was done in the big farmhouse kitchen without the help of modern broth cubes or powdered gelatine. First the broth was prepared with the veal shanks and meat, chicken bones, bay leaves, cinnamon, onion, cloves, carrots, celery and lastly aromatized vinegar. An intense aroma pervaded the kitchen and made my mouth water. Daydreaming about these times brings back fond memories of a big, united, hardworking family.

The filtering of the broth was the crucial moment of the whole procedure, a slow and diligent job. A kitchen chair was placed on top of the table, the straw seat having been removed. The corners of a large clean apron were tied around each of the four chair legs, and this was used as a filter. A big salad bowl collected the clear, golden liquid that dripped through and which was then put in a cool place to set.



Finanziera Finanziera

Serves 8

Preparation: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 1½ hours

200g (scant ½ lb) ground beef, shaped into little balls – 200g (scant ½ lb) veal spinal cord – 200g (scant ½ lb) veal brains – 200g (scant ½ lb) veal sweetbreads – 100g (3½ oz) chicken liver – 100g (3½ oz) chicken crest – 100g (3½ oz) veal kidney, chopped – 100g (3½ oz) pork liver – 100g (3½ oz) veal filet – 50g (⅓ cup) peas – 50g (⅓ cup) porcini mushrooms, in oil – butter – 75ml (⅓ cup) warm broth – 25g (2 tablespoons) flour – 150 ml (⅔ cup) Barbaresco or Barolo wine – 15ml (1 tablespoon) vinegar – 30ml (2 tablespoons) Marsala wine

A heavy casserole, a large flameproof ceramic saucepan, a large spoon.

Fry until crisp a small amount of brains and spinal cord and set aside to use as garnish when serving. Cut the spinal cord into strips and tie each in a knot. Melt the butter in the casserole and add the spinal cord and kidney. When golden brown add the broth. Set aside in the saucepan and keep warm and covered to avoid drying out. Proceed with all the other ingredients, one at a time. First dredge in flour, then cook in a bit of oil, adding small quantities of broth as necessary to prevent sticking. As each ingredient is cooked, add it to the kidney and spinal cord mixture in the saucepan, keeping it on low heat and occasionally adding small amounts of wine so that the sauce remains well blended and does not dry out. Add the vinegar and Marsala to the casserole just before serving, and garnish with the fried bits that were set aside earlier.



Nebbiolo d'Alba



Finanziera alla Cavour

Sometimes we see the name of this dish embellished with “*alla Cavour*”. This is the result of geographic diffusion and various events over time. It originates from the fact that many financiers in the city of Torino enjoyed dining at the famous *il Cambio* restaurant, which still exists today. The word *finanziera* translates roughly as “food for great financiers” and the word Cavour was added because Count Camillo Benso di Cavour soon became the most important among them; this dish was one of his favourites. The dish continues to bear his name in many places, even if the Alba version is slightly different to what is served in big restaurants. It all depends on the ingredients (always choice local products) and the addition of the Barolo or Barbaresco wine which is worked into the sauce. The result is a delicate dish with a unique aroma, worth eating slowly to savour each morsel.



Fonduta con tartufi Fonduta with Truffles

Serves 10

Preparation: 5 hours

Cooking time: 1/2 hour

1 kg (2¹/₄ lbs) *fontina* cheese – milk – 10 egg yolks – 100g (scant 1/2 cup) butter – approximately 20-30g (1/3 to 1/2 cup) per person shaved Alba truffles

A double boiler, a wooden spoon.

Cut the cheese into small cubes and place it in a deep bowl. Add enough milk to cover and leave standing a few hours. In a double boiler combine the butter and egg yolks. In the double boiler slowly heat the butter and eggs yolks. Add the *fontina* and the milk. As the ingredients melt, stir vigorously. The *fontina* will become rather gooey as it melts; mixing well will help it thicken again. When the mixture has reached a dense creamy consistency remove from heat, top with the truffle shavings and serve immediately.



Nebbiolo d'Alba



People who must often travel, whether for work or not, can find themselves frequently travelling the same routes, be it by ship, airplane, truck or car and, in the past, by horse drawn cart – *'l tamagnùn*. Intrinsic to being on the road is connecting with others, and it is not so rare to meet someone with whom new business interests can be struck up in order to increase one's earnings on the side. This is just what happened a century ago or perhaps even earlier. The sale of wines from Alba was established in Aosta, but the *cartunè*, or transporters, were paid relatively little for a long, arduous journey. So they began loading up their empty carts with large round wheels of *fontina* cheese to bring back and sell in Alba. They found good clients in the self-important bourgeois, who would buy whole forms of this delicious cheese. However, it was problematic to preserve during the summer because of the heat, or perhaps adequate storage space was lacking, or even because, being that these forms are indeed rather large, it was difficult to consume it all that cheese before it began to spoil. Even the rich dislike wasting food, and though it is not known where or by whom (likely a skilful servant), someone in one of these households who knew how to utilize leftovers decided to melt the *fontina*, returning it to its previous state, then maybe added a little milk, some egg yolks to give it more colour and thus fonduta was invented. I wonder how many other recipes have come into being in the same way, through experimenting, testing and trying, then correcting a bit more, so as not to waste leftovers or money. Nowadays, we eat fonduta for pleasure or curiosity, but many recipes, especially the simpler dishes, were born out of necessity and sometimes even to keep starvation at bay. The latter was probably not the case for fonduta, a point proven by the addition of the fresh Alba truffles found in October or November. Probably some gourmand found the fonduta a bit dull and set about enlivening it. Fonduta with truffles is a true Alba delicacy; when prepared well, it is regal.



I Gamberi River Shrimp

Shrimp native to the streams of the Langhe, especially the Belbo, were once considered quite a delicacy. The following recipe is given here as a historical relic; it is taken from a manuscript dated 1822, from the city of Cuneo. In reality river shrimp are now a protected species and their capture is prohibited.

“For small shrimp, remove the tails while they are still alive and then parboil them, Sauté some garlic and parsley in olive oil, shell the shrimp and add them to the sauté. Add a bit of water and season with salt, pepper and spices. For larger shrimp, cook them whole and then remove the tails and shell them. Do not season them but serve them simply, nicely laid out on a plate. They can be dipped into a cold sauce made from ground fennel seeds, minced garlic and parsley, salt, vinegar, olive oil and spices”.



Cavedani “Barb” fritti *ed in carpione* Marinated Fried Chub

Serves 4

Preparation: 1 hour

Cooking time, fish: 30 minutes; marinade: 30 minutes

18 fresh small chub – 300g (3 cups) flour – 1 litre (1 quart) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 1 lemon – 1 head of garlic – 2 sprigs of sage – 75ml (1/3 cup) white wine vinegar – salt

A knife, a skillet, paper towel, a *basila* [deep serving dish], a plate to cover the serving dish, a small skillet.

Rinse, gut, and flour the fish, then fry in very hot oil. When golden-brown drain on paper towel, sprinkle with lemon juice and serve hot. The left over fish can be marinated (see below) and kept for several days in the refrigerator or other cool place.

Marinade: Put the fish in the serving dish and set aside. Sauté some garlic cloves and the sage in a bit of olive oil. When the garlic is golden add the vinegar and salt. Bring it to a boil and pour over the fish and let cool to room temperature, covered. Store in refrigerator or other cool place and serve cold.



Langhe Chardonnay

Translator’s note: dishes which are prepared “*in carpione*” are stored in their marinade, which has a preserving effect as well as imparting a fresh tart flavour.





Cappone in galantina Capon Galantine

Serves 10

Preparation: 3 hours

Cooking time: 2 hours

A capon, approximately 4kg (9 lb) – 800g (1³/₄ lbs) lean veal – 200g (1 cup) salted veal tongue – 200g (1/2 lb) pancetta – 1/2 a nutmeg, grated – 20 pistachios – 30g (1/2 cup) shaved Alba truffles – 150ml (2/3 cup) Marsala wine – 2.5g (1 teaspoon) salt – 1.25g (1/2 teaspoon) pepper

A large pot, a knife, a chopping knife, a chopping board, needle and thread, a large piece of cheesecloth or muslin, string.

Bone the capon (see below). Mince half the veal and dice the other half with the tongue, pancetta and truffles. Add the grated nutmeg, pistachios, Marsala, salt, and pepper and mix well. Stuff the mixture into the capon. Sew up the capon securely, tie it up in a clean white cloth and place it in the pot. Add enough water to cover and bring to a boil. Cook for two hours, remove from heat and let cool completely before chilling. Serve sliced with cubes of aspic garnish.

To prepare of the capon: Pluck the bird and remove giblets. Bone the capon using a small boning knife starting from the neck. Remove the bones from the neck downward gradually turning the bird inside out. Turn it right side out to stuff it.

Translator's note: *Prosciutto crudo* may be substituted for the salted tongue.



Roero Arneis



Agnello al forno Roast Lamb

Serves 10

Cooking time: 2¹/₂ hours

Preheat oven to 240°C/475°F/gas mark 9

3kg (6¹/₂ lbs) leg of lamb – 4 sprigs of rosemary – 6 garlic cloves – 100ml (scant 1/2 cup) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 50g (1/4 cup) butter – salt – pepper – 150ml (2/3 cup) dry white wine

A small knife, a *bibinera* [terracotta oven dish with lid], a serving fork. Make small incisions in the meat and insert the cloves of garlic and rosemary. Rub with the oil and butter; add salt and pepper to taste and place in the oven dish.

Cover and roast at 240°C /475°F/gas mark 9 for 30 minutes. Add the wine and reduce the heat to 220°C/450°F/gas mark 8. After 30 minutes reduce the heat again, to 200°C/400°F/gas mark 6 and roast for another 30 minutes. Reduce to 190°C/375°F/gas mark 5 for the last 45 minutes. Each time the temperature is reduced the pieces of lamb should be turned and basted with the cooking juices. Fifteen minutes before serving remove the lid, allowing the meat to crisp and darken a bit.

Translator's note: In Nonna Genia's day meat dishes of this type were an excellent way to take advantage of a hot oven, just after having baked bread. The descending oven temperatures given here are to help replicate the cooling down of the wood oven once the last batch of bread had been removed.



Barbaresco





Anitra di Palmina Palmina's Duck

Serves 4

Pre-cooking and cooking: 2 hours

1 Muscovy duck – 30g (2 tablespoons) salt – 2.5g (1 teaspoon) pepper – 500ml (2 cups) Arneis wine – 1 onion – 1 carrot – 2 celery stalks – 150ml (²/₃ cup) cognac – 500ml (2 cups) beef broth – 500g (1 lb) new potatoes

A *bibinera* [terracotta casserole with lid], a serving fork, a carving knife.

Pluck and gut the duck and rinse well. Singe it over a gas flame. Remove and discard the head and neck, the wing tips, the feet, and tail. Salt and pepper the insides and place the duck in the casserole. Add the wine and cook covered over low heat until the wine has almost completely evaporated, leaving only some fat in the bottom of the dish. Remove the duck and set aside, keeping it warm. Pour off all the remaining fat and add the chopped onion, carrot and celery. Sauté and return the duck to the pan, allowing it to brown. Add the broth and cognac and continue cooking until the liquid has almost cooked off.

Carve the duck and serve on a warmed serving plate together with the juices, buttered new potatoes (the appropriate quantity is given above), and a salad of valerian or chicory, depending on the season.



Barolo



I first tasted this dish when I was about fifteen years old and it was prepared by Palmina, who, at my insistence, prepared it again and again. Each time she made it was better than the time before, so I named the dish for her.

If you follow the instructions for this recipe, you will obtain a flavourful dish that is pleasant to the palate and not greasy. As is the case with so many Langa recipes, the simple ingredients harmonize together beautifully and there is no comparison with duck *à l'orange* or any nouvelle cuisine recipes which incorporate strongly-flavoured ingredients attempting to mask the often unpleasant flavour of duck which has not been cooked correctly.



Coniglio con peperoni Rabbit with Peppers

Serves 6

Preparation: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 1½ hours

A 1.5kg (3½ lb) rabbit, cut into pieces – 50g (¼ cup) veal fat – 1 bay leaf – a sprig of rosemary – salt – 150ml (⅔ cup) broth – 5 bell peppers, cut into strips – 3 anchovies in salt, well rinsed and bones removed – 3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced – 50g (¼ cup) plus 15g (1 tablespoon) butter – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 230ml (1 cup) good wine vinegar

A carving knife, a deep skillet, a serving fork, a saucepan.

Skin and gut the rabbit and cut into large pieces. In a saucepan slowly heat the veal fat and 50g (¼ cup) butter with the bay leaf, rosemary and salt. Add the rabbit and cook, turning frequently. When browned, pour off the excess fat and add the broth a bit at a time, stirring often. Cover and keep warm while preparing the peppers.

In a separate saucepan cook the peppers with the anchovies, garlic and some oil and butter, stirring continuously. Stir in the vinegar, and pour the mixture into the skillet with the rabbit. Cook gently for 20 minutes before serving.



Barbera d'Alba



This is very popular dish of the Langhe and is liked by everyone, as is *Chicken alla Cacciatora* (see page 128). It is easy to prepare and the ingredients are available all year around, with rabbits from the farm and the long growing season for peppers. If necessary, fresh peppers can be substituted with *pouvron smojà* or those preserved in vinegar without greatly affecting the flavours of the dish.



Arrosto di maiale al latte Pork Roast in Milk

Serves 4

Cooking time: 2 hours

500g (generous 1 lb) boneless pork loin – salt and pepper to taste – 250ml (1 cup), plus 75ml (1/3 cup) whole milk – 500g (generous 1 lb) new potatoes – rosemary – 2 garlic cloves

A heavy copper casserole with lid, a meat fork, a spoon

Sprinkle the pork with salt and put it in the casserole with 250 ml (1 cup) of milk, the rosemary and garlic. Cover and bring to a boil. Cook slowly until the milk is reduced. Increase the heat and brown the meat well. Drain off the fat and remove the meat; slice it and set aside, keeping it warm. Add the remaining milk to the coagulated milk in the pan, stir to blend and bring to a boil. Pour over the roast and serve.

This dish dates from 1800's and initially was probably tasty though rather greasy. At some point milk was added to the recipe and so it evolved into the more refined version we have today. Lightly buttered new potatoes go well with this dish because they absorb the excess fat. The quantity indicated here is ideal to accompany the roast.



Barbaresco



Brasato al Barolo Braised Veal in Barolo Wine

Serves 8

Preparation: 10 minutes

Cooking time: 3 hours

1 kg (2 1/4 lb) boneless veal shoulder roast – 25g (scant 2 tablespoons) butter – 25g (scant 2 tablespoons) *lardo* Piedmontese or Valdostano, – 1 large onion – 1 garlic clove – 1 carrot, diced – 1 celery stalk – sprig of rosemary – 1 bay leaf – 10 cloves – a piece of stick cinnamon – salt – pepper – 1 bottle Barolo wine – 1 litre (1 quart) beef broth, or enough to cover the meat in the casserole – 60ml (1/4 cup) rum

An oval copper casserole with lid, a serving fork, a sieve.

Mash the butter and *lardo* together and blend well. Put the mixture in the casserole along with the meat, adding the garlic, onion, carrot, celery, rosemary, bay leaf, cloves, cinnamon, and salt and pepper to taste.

Cook on medium-high heat until the meat is well-browned. Add the wine and lower the heat. When the wine is almost completely reduced add 120ml (1/2 cup) cold water. Repeat the same amount of cold water three more times, each time waiting until it has cooked down almost completely before adding the next. Add enough hot broth to cover the meat and cook with the lid on for an hour at moderate heat.

Remove the meat and sieve the juices. Return both to the casserole and continue cooking until the liquid reaches the desired consistency. Add the rum and cook another 15 minutes. Remove the meat to a platter, slice thinly and serve with the sauce.

Translator's note: It is important to use a casserole in which the meat is covered completely by the wine and broth during cooking. The sauce was traditionally puréed through a sieve; in the name of expediency a hand-held mixer can be used.



Barolo





Beccaccia su crostone di polenta Woodcock with Polenta

Serves 1

Cooking time: 1½ hours

1 woodcock – 1 slice pancetta – 50g (1½ oz) *lardo* Piedmontese or Valdostano – 25g (2 tablespoons) chopped prosciutto crudo – 60g (½ cup) butter – 1 small carrot – 1 celery stalk – a small bunch parsley – 1 bay leaf – 10 juniper berries – 150ml (⅔ cup) Marsala wine – 1 large slice of baked polenta

String, a small saucepan with lid, a fork, a sieve.

Pluck and gut the woodcock, wrap the pancetta, around it and secure with cooking twine. Chop the ham, carrot, celery, and parsley and sauté in butter with the bay leaf. Add the woodcock and cook well, turning often until browned on all sides. Add the juniper berries and Marsala. When the woodcock is cooked, about 30 minutes, remove from the pan and sieve the sauce. Place the bird in the centre of the baked polenta, pour the sauce over it and serve immediately.

Translator's note: Traditionally the sauce was puréed through a sieve; in the name of expediency a blender or hand-held mixer can be used.



Barbaresco



Fagiano in salmì Pheasant in “*Salmì*” Sauce

Serves 4

Cooking time: 2 hours

1 pheasant, prepared for cooking – 1 sprig of fresh sage – 5 cloves – 2 bay leaves – 1 sprig rosemary – 1 piece stick cinnamon – 5 juniper berries – 50g (¼ cup) butter – 1 oz *lardo* Piedmontese or Valdostano, diced – salt and pepper – 1 garlic clove – 10g (¼ cup) fresh parsley leaves, chopped – 1 anchovy in salt, well rinsed and bones removed – 12g (2 tablespoons) flour – 30ml (2 tablespoons) Marsala – 4 *crostoni* [thick slices of bread browned in melted butter]

A sieve, a copper casserole, a meat fork, a heavy skillet.

Set the liver aside. Place the pheasant in the saucepan with the sage, bay leaves, rosemary, cloves, cinnamon, juniper berries, butter, diced *lardo*, salt and pepper. Brown the meat well on all sides. Chop the liver, garlic, parsley and anchovy and add these to the pheasant. Cook for a few minutes to heat through. Remove the sauce from the pan and sieve it. If it is too liquid, thicken it with a bit of flour. Return the sauce to the pan and add the Marsala, cooking for a few more minutes. Apart, melt 45-60g (3-4 tablespoons) of butter in a skillet. Add the bread and sauté it slowly, turning a few times until golden. Serve the pheasant on the *crostoni* with the sauce.

Translator's note: This was once a traditional way to prepare freshly hunted pheasant, something which occurs ever less frequently today. The sauce was traditionally puréed through a sieve; in the name of expediency a blender or hand-held mixer can be used.



Barbaresco





Pernici in salmì Partridges in “*Salmi*” Sauce

Serves 4

Preparation: 1 hour

Cooking time: 1½ hours

4 partridges, hearts and livers set aside – 60ml (¼ cup) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 60g (¼ cup) butter – salt, pepper – a 3cm (1¼ inch) slice prosciutto crudo, not trimmed of fat – 1 anchovy in salt, well rinsed and bones removed – 1 small onion, chopped – 2 cloves of garlic, chopped – 1 litre (1 quart) beef, chicken or vegetable broth – 8 *crostoni* [thick slices of bread browned in melted butter] – 100ml (½ cup) Marsala wine – sprigs of mixed fresh herbs (parsley, sage, bay leaf), tied together with cooking twine

A medium sized copper casserole with lid, a sieve, a wooden spoon.

Brown the partridges in butter, oil, salt and pepper. Chop the prosciutto crudo and add it to the casserole with the hearts, livers, anchovy, onion and garlic and the herbs. Combine well and continue cooking for a few minutes, until the onion is wilted. Add some of the Marsala and when it is cooked down add a cup of the broth. Cook down again and add some more Marsala. Continue to cook, alternating the Marsala with the broth. When the last broth is added cover and cook slowly until the meat takes on a rich colour.

Sieve the sauce. Apart, melt the butter in a skillet. Add the bread and sauté it slowly, turning a few

times until golden. Cut the partridges in half, place each half on a *crostone*, spoon on some of the sauce and serve.

Translator’s note: Traditionally the sauce was puréed through a sieve; in the name of expediency a blender or hand-held mixer can be used.

As a young man I used to hunt game birds, and I am truly sorry that partridges have disappeared from our autumn menu. It is a real pity, and not just for the gastronomic value or even for the thrill one gets when hunting (even though I’ll confess that the part that affected me the most was when my dog would indicate where the partridge was). No, the real loss is that we are even deprived of the pleasant chance to spot it, good eyesight permitting, running through the fields and vineyards against the colourful autumn backdrop. It was fun trying to glimpse a partridge, camouflaged by its pretty plumage. Today you can sometimes find them in specialized butchers’ shops, but who knows where they come from? Some say that pheasants are to blame for the demise of the partridges, since during the nesting period pheasants hungrily devour partridge eggs. Perhaps it is illness or even pesticides. Ecologists busy themselves with the re-population of wolves, bears, wild boars, etc., but will they ever think about this delicate peaceful little bird? While we wait for something to happen we can at least turn to Nonna Genia, who was lucky to have lived in a period when partridges would suddenly appear just beyond the farmyard. She could await the arrival of the hunters, admiring what they had caught and contemplating what to cook...



Barbaresco





Lepre al civet Hare in Wine Sauce

Serves 8

Marinating time: 48 hours

Cooking time: 3 hours

A freshly hunted hare, stored in the refrigerator for 8 days – hare's blood – hare's liver – 2 bottles of good vintage Dolcetto wine – 1 carrot, chopped – 1/2 onion, chopped – 1 bay leaf – 10 crushed peppercorns – 5 cloves – 1 piece stick cinnamon – 1 celery stalk, chopped – 1 garlic clove – 50g (scant 2 oz) slice of *lardo* Piedmontese or Valdostano, cubed – 60g (1/4 cup) butter – salt – 250ml (1 cup) broth – 75ml (1/3 cup) Marsala wine

A chopping knife, a sieve, serving fork, a salad bowl, a copper casserole.

Carefully skin and gut the hare. Cut it into pieces and rinse it in wine (not water). Set aside the blood for use in the marinade and the liver for the sauce. Combine the wine, blood, carrot, onion, bay leaf, pepper, cloves, cinnamon, celery and the garlic. Add the hare, ensuring that it is completely immersed in the marinade, and leave covered in a cool place for 24-48 hours.

Remove the hare and the vegetables from the marinade and put them in the casserole, reserving the liquid. Add the *lardo*, butter, and salt to taste. Over medium-high brown the meat. Remove the excess fat and add a bit of broth.

Continue to cook over low heat for an hour. Add the liquid from the marinade cook gently for another hour and a half over low heat. Ten minutes prior to serving sieve the sauce along with the vegetables and liver, return it to the casserole, and add the Marsala.

Translator's note: When rinsing the hare prior to marinating, use 500-700ml (2-3 cups) of red wine which is then discarded. Traditionally the sauce was puréed through a sieve; in the name of expediency a blender or hand-held mixer can be used.



Barolo



Capretto arrosto Roast Young Goat

Serves 10

Preparation: 40 minutes

Cooking time: 2 hours

4kg (scant 9 lbs) young goat – 2 sprigs fresh rosemary – 3 garlic cloves – 300ml (1 1/3 cups) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – salt – 60g (1/2 cup) butter – pepper – 150ml (2/3 cup) dry white wine – 500ml (2 cups) broth

A *bibinera* [a terracotta casserole with lid], a serving fork, a chopping knife.

Pierce the meat with the tip of the knife and insert the garlic and pieces of the rosemary. Put the meat in the *bibinera* with the oil, butter and pepper and the meat. Cook on medium-high heat until it is nicely browned. Salt the meat, drizzle with a bit of the wine, and reduce heat. After 15 minutes drizzle with more wine, repeating with the last of the wine after another 15 minutes. When the last of the wine is cooked down, add the broth and continue cooking with the lid on, approximately 45 minutes.



Barolo aged 12-15 years





Pollo alla cacciatora
Chicken alla Cacciatora
(Hunter's Chicken)

Serves 4

Cooking time: 1½ hours

A young 1,300g (2¾ lb) free range chicken, cut into pieces – 130ml (½ cup) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 60g (¼ cup) butter – 1 sprig of rosemary – 1 bay leaf – salt and pepper to taste – 1 large onion, sliced – 3 ripe tomatoes, coarsely chopped – 500ml (2 cups) broth

A deep heavy skillet, a wooden spoon, poultry shears.

Cut the chicken into pieces and brown well in the oil and butter together with the rosemary, bay leaf, and salt and pepper. Add the onion and continue cooking until it becomes golden. Add the tomatoes, then the broth a ladle at a time allowing the liquid to cook down in between. When all the broth has been added, cook until the sauce has obtained the desired consistency. This dish is good served in the autumn as an accompaniment to polenta.



Dolcetto di Diano d'Alba



This dish is similar to *Coniglio con peperoni* [rabbit with peppers] (see page 118) in that both are very simple to prepare and are popular in the Langhe area; it is a superb example of our rustic cuisine. Prior to the telephone, anyone could drop by unannounced: relatives and friends, even the farm owners – city dwellers out in the country for a day of hunting in the autumn (there were so many hares, partridges and pheasants in that era!). This put the host in the position of having to make a dish that could be prepared rapidly and reliably and that everyone would like.

Pollo alla Cacciatora is a typical autumn dish: the last tomatoes are on the vines and the spring poultry is still young and tender. A chicken is selected, killed, plucked and cleaned, and cut into pieces. It can easily simmer in the onion and tomato while the guests chat, perhaps about the grape harvest, sipping some good wine while the skilful cook efficiently makes some tagliatelle, which are always welcome. Then the chicken is ready: fragrant, inviting, flavourful and delicious. If it is late in the season and the corn has already been ground, pasta can be replaced, for once, by polenta – who can resist the combination of polenta with the chicken and its delicious sauce?



Pollo alla Marengo Chicken Marengo

Serves 4

Preparation: ½ hour

Cooking time: 1 hour

A young free range chicken, 1,300g (3½ lbs) – flour for dredging – 120ml (½ cup) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 100g (½ cup) butter – a pinch of freshly grated nutmeg – salt and pepper to taste – 1 garlic clove, crushed – ½ bottle Madeira wine – 230ml (1 cup) chicken broth – ¼ lemon – 10g (3 tablespoons) chopped fresh parsley – 4 *crostoni* [thick slices of bread browned in melted butter]

2 heavy skillets, a serving plate, a serving fork, chicken shears.

Cut the chicken into quarters and dredge it in flour. Melt the oil and 60g (¼ cup) of butter in a skillet and add the chicken. Season with grated nutmeg, salt, pepper and garlic. Brown the chicken on medium-high heat, turning often. Add 750ml (⅔ cup) of the Madeira and continue cooking over moderate heat until the chicken is golden. Add the broth in 2 or 3 steps, cooking each time until it is reduced.

Add the rest of the Madeira and heat through. In another skillet melt the remaining 60g (¼ cup) of butter. Add the bread and sauté it slowly, turning a few times until golden. Arrange the *crostoni* on the serving plate and place a piece of chicken on top of each. Spoon sauce over the chicken and garnish with a bit of fresh squeezed lemon juice and the parsley.



Nebbiolo d'Alba



Chicken Marengo is a fairly simple recipe, given the circumstances in which it came into being. It is, in fact, named for the tiny village of Marengo, adjacent to the city of Alessandria and site of the decisive battle in Napoleon Bonaparte's Italian campaign. The story behind the dish is as follows. Austrian couriers were despatched to Vienna to relay messages telling of two victories against the French, who had even lost their provision wagons. The remaining French troops, however, managed to recover, and guided by Napoleon's general Desaix defeated the Austrians. Legend has it that the emperor's cook came up with this dish that evening, having procured a chicken nearby. The ingredients are simple, what one would find in a peasant's house with the exception of the Madeira which was probably held back among Napoleon's provisions and gives the dish its distinctive flavour.



Trippa Tripe

Serves 5

Preparation: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 2½ hours

50g (¼ cup) butter – 60ml (¼ cup) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 1 celery stalk, finely chopped – a sprig of fresh rosemary, finely chopped – 3 large onions, thinly sliced – 500-600g (1 very generous lb) tripe, cut into strips, rinsed and patted dry – 4 litres (4 quarts) water – salt – pepper – 3 large potatoes, peeled – 15ml (1 tablespoon) tomato paste – grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

A deep terracotta pot, a *mezzaluna*, a chopping board, a knife, a ladle, a saucepan.

Heat the butter and the oil in the pot. Add the celery and rosemary. After 3-4 minutes add the onion and cook over moderate heat until they are golden. Add the tripe and cook for 4-5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Salt and pepper to taste.

In another large pot bring 4 litres (4 quarts) of salted water to a boil.

Add the tripe mixture, the potatoes and the tomato paste. Bring to a boil and simmer gently for 2½ hours partly covered, stirring occasionally. Prior to serving break up the potatoes. Serve topped with good aged Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.



Piemonte Bonarda



The weekly Alba market was on Saturdays and the stalls spread out into squares and along roads. An immense variety of local products from the nearby hills could be found, arriving from gardens, barns, orchards, and courtyards. You could find cattle and poultry, eggs and cheese, seasonal fruit and vegetables. Everything was genuine and followed the course of the seasons. The only variation was during the grape harvest, when carts carrying the grapes literally occupied the city, encircling it and taking over Piazza Savona and Piazza San Paolo. All those carts were patiently lined up and waiting hours on end for buyers, sometimes even into the night. If they were lucky, there was a faint September sun, otherwise a cold bothersome rain pattered down on the cart tarpaulins and slowly penetrated the peasants cloaks, some of which were army surplus from World War I. On clear days those carts seemed a celebration of the grandeur of the “capital of the Langhe”. But when it was wet, grey and foggy, it epitomized the hard, tiring and often uncomfortable lives of our farmers.

It could be said that market days were also tripe days. On every corner there was a hotel, tavern or inn, and they all served tripe – from early morning up until noon. Big steaming bowls of it were served to clients either seated at tables or to those throughout the market who remained at their stalls of goods for sale. Warm and fragrant, it was savoured slowly from a large white bowl (often decorated with blue flowers), sitting or perhaps even squatting. Here was a nourishing dish in which to dunk mouthfuls of homemade bread (and what bread it was!), and it cost very little, only a few *lire*. Upon returning home in the evenings the farmers usually had a dinner of either polenta or vegetable soup.

Tripe even entered into politics. There are stories (true or legends) of halved five lira banknotes or a single new shoe (only the right one) offered to voters by politicians. In this way a candidate could assure himself of a few more votes: if he was elected, the voters would receive the other half, whether banknote or pair of shoes. Sometimes the candidate sent around an errand boy to offer a dish of tripe to potential voters as a show of generosity and as a way of tipping the scales in his favour; if he was extremely generous a glass of wine was poured into the bowl as well. It is easy, then, to see why this dish is so solidly part of our culture: tasty, nutritious, and well-imbedded in our history.



Bolliti Boiled Meats

Serves 6

Cooking time: 4 hours

500g (generous 1 lb) veal ribs – 500g (1 lb) veal tail – 500g (generous 1 lb) *testina* [external layer of skin from the calf's head, cleaned of hair] – 500g (generous 1 lb) veal rump – 500g (generous 1 lb) veal shank – salt – water – 1 small bunch parsley – 2 celery stalks – 1 onion – 1 sprig of rosemary

A large pot, a serving fork.

Place all the ingredients in the pot, add enough hot water to cover and use the same quantity of salt as for boiling pasta. Bring to a boil and let simmer for as long as 4 hours.

Serve the meats hot, accompanied by flavourful “*bagnèt*” [sauces] for dipping (recipes follow).

Translator's note: The importance of *testina* in this dish cannot be understated; the broth is delicious even when it is not included, but serious cooks in the Langhe would not be without it. Being quite gelatinous, it adds both to the flavour and to the texture of the broth. Though it is in all likelihood very difficult to find outside of Italy, it is a quest worth undertaking!

Note that in Nonna Genia's time people tended to let meat cook a very long time. For a more modern flavour, 2 hours simmering will be more than sufficient.



Dolcetto d'Alba



Jana the horse hobbled down the road, pulling the cart toward the farmhouse. The package of meat had been soaking up the sun for the several hours since they had left Alba. As soon as they arrived in the farmyard *Vigiu*, the farmhand, took the parcel inside to *Madlena*, the cook. There were no refrigerators, so she put the meat in a pot to boil (to limit any damage from sitting in the sun) and cooked it halfway; this way she could finish cooking it the next day, to serve for Sunday lunch. Ever since I was a child I have observed similar scenes. Contrary to what it may seem, it is in fact not necessarily the wrong way to cook this dish and it results in incredibly flavourful meat. The best boiled meat we always ate was in the places where they had seemingly forgotten the meat on a corner of the wood stove, slowly cooking away, even for a few days.



“*Bagnèt ross*” Red Sauce

Condiment for boiled meats

Cooking time: 2 hours

1kg (2¹/₄ lbs) ripe tomatoes – 1 onion – 1 small bunch of basil – 1 small bunch of parsley – 1 sprig fresh rosemary – 2 garlic cloves – 1 *spagnolìn* [dried red chilli pepper] – 1 carrot – 1 bell pepper – 1 celery stalk – salt – 70ml (¹/₃ cup) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

A saucepan, a sieve, a wooden spoon, a large bowl.

Peel the tomatoes, remove the seeds and chop. Put them in the saucepan with all the other ingredients and cook until it has reduced to a thick mixture. Sieve the mixture and return it to the saucepan with the oil and salt and pepper to taste. Bring it to a boil and serve hot.

Translator’s note: Traditionally this sauce was put through a sieve; for the sake of expediency a hand-held mixer is suggested.



“*Bagnèt verd*” Green Sauce

Condiment for boiled meats

Preparation: 1 hour

1 bunch of parsley – 1 garlic clove – yolks of 2 hardboiled eggs – 2 anchovies in salt, well rinsed and bones removed – 10 capers in salt or brine, rinsed – 1 thick slice of soft white bread, crust removed – good white wine vinegar – 120ml (¹/₂ cup) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – salt

A *mezzaluna*, a chopping board, a bowl, a spoon.

Soak the bread in vinegar, squeeze it out and set aside. Finely chop the parsley leaves (discard the stems), garlic, hard boiled egg yolks, anchovies, capers, and moist bread. Transfer to a bowl and add the salt and olive oil, blending well to form a dense sauce. Prepare a few hours prior to serving to give the flavours time to blend.

Translator’s note: This sauce is much better when prepared completely by hand, without a food processor; it is worth the bit of extra time involved.





“Sausa d’avìe”
Tangy Honey Walnut Sauce

Condiment for boiled meats

Preparation: 1¼ hours

1kg (3 cups) thick organic honey – 200g (1¾ cups) shelled walnuts, very finely chopped – 50ml (¼ cup) broth, warmed – 25g (3½ tablespoons) dried mustard

A marble mortar and wooden pestle, a large bowl.

Using the mortar and pestle blend the walnuts with the warm broth, a bit at a time. Add the mustard and mix well. In the double-boiler heat the honey to 40°C (100°F). Add it to the mortar and blend the mixture well as it cools.

Translator’s note: This is literally “Bees’ Sauce”, as the name implies (*avìe* means “bees” in the Piedmontese dialect). It is best prepared as closely to the traditional method as possible. Using a mortar and pestle helps release the oil in the walnuts contributing to both the consistency and the flavour.



“Cognà”
Langhe Fruit Condiment

Condiment for boiled meats

Cooking time: 3½ hours

2kg (4½ lbs) Dolcetto grapes – 500g (generous 1 lb) Renette or other tart apples, peeled, cored and sliced – 500g (generous 1 lb) fresh figs – 500g (1 lb) “Martine” pears, peeled, cored and sliced – 10g (1½ tablespoons) stick cinnamon, in pieces – 15 cloves – 300g (2½ cups) mixed walnuts and hazelnuts, toasted

A sieve, a saucepan, an earthenware preserving jar.

Crush the grapes and push them through a sieve them to separate the skins and the stems from the juice. Bring the grape must to a boil and cook until slightly reduced. Add the sliced apples, the figs and the pears, the crushed cinnamon and the cloves.

Simmer the mixture until the fruit is cooked and a syrupy consistency is obtained. Add the nuts and mix well. *Cognà* will keep for years in a properly sealed and stored earthenware jar.

In particularly hard times this was spread on bread for a snack for the children and the adults had it for supper.

Translator’s note: The Martine pear is a variety indigenous to the Langhe. Its fruit is very small, hard and quite dry, making it ill-suited for eating but good for cooking in various dishes (see also *Timballo di pere Martine*, page 158).





Lingua al giardino Pork Tongue with Spicy Sauce

Serves 2

Preparation: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 2 hours

1 pork tongue – 1 onion – 2 carrots – 1 celery stalk – extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 2.5g (1 tablespoon) chopped fresh parsley leaves – 5 anchovies in salt, well rinsed and bones removed – 15ml (1 tablespoon) tomato sauce – 1 *spagnolín* [dried chilli pepper], split, seeds removed and crushed – 6g (1 tablespoon) flour – 30-45ml (2-3 tablespoons) vinegar – 230ml (1 cup) cooking water from the tongue

A large pot, a large knife, a serving fork, a saucepan, a serving plate, a bowl, a spoon.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil, and add enough salt as for cooking pasta. Add the tongue and cook until tender and the tines of the fork can be pushed in with little resistance. Remove and set aside. When cooled, remove the skin and slice thinly. Bring the same water to a boil again and immerse the tongue for 5 minutes. Drain the meat and arrange on a serving plate.

Prepare the sauce. Finely chop the onion, carrot, and celery and sauté in oil. Add the chopped parsley, capers, tomato sauce and crushed chilli pepper to taste and stir well. Put the flour in a separate bowl and add the cooking water a little at a time, blending into the flour completely before adding more. Add this to the other mixture, stirring well to avoid lumps. If the sauce is too thick add more broth, then add the vinegar. Pour sauce over the sliced tongue and serve warm or at room temperature.

Translator's note: When preparing the *spagnolín* rubber gloves should be worn.



Barbera d'Alba



"Oriòn" Pig's head

Serves 5

Preparation and cooking time: 5 hours

4 litres (4 quarts) water – 1kg (2 lbs) of meat from a pig's head, including the ears – salt – 1 onion – 4 garlic cloves – 100g (3½ oz) anchovies in salt, well rinsed and bones removed – 1 small bunch of parsley – a sprig of rosemary – 175ml (¾ cup) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 1 bay leaf – 150ml (⅔ cup) white wine vinegar – 5 bell peppers, cleaned, trimmed and sliced

A large pot, a chopping board, a chopping knife, a casserole, a large knife, a serving fork.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil, and add enough salt as for cooking pasta. Cook the meat in salted water until tender and drain. When completely cooled cut into thin slices. Finely chop the onion, garlic, anchovies, parsley and the rosemary and sauté over low heat in a casserole with the bay leaf. When browned add the vinegar. Bring to a boil and add the peppers. Cook until the liquid has been absorbed.

Place the peppers in a serving platter and layer the meat on top. Pour the sauce from the casserole over the meat and peppers and serve immediately while hot.

Translator's note: The word "*Oriòn*" means "large ears" in the dialect of Alba.



Barbera d'Alba aged 3 years





“Rolade” Veal Rolls

Serves 5

Preparation 50 minutes

Cooking time: 1 hour

500g (generous 1 lb) veal escallops – 1 large bunch of parsley, finely chopped – 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped – 60g (1/4 cup) butter – 2 hardboiled eggs, sliced – 5 thin slices *salame cotto* – 1 onion – 1 carrot – 3 celery stalks – 75ml (1/3 cup) dry white wine – 230ml (1 cup) broth

Cooking twine, a skillet, a large knife, a serving fork.

Pound the meat until flat then cut into large pieces (this can also be done by the butcher). Finely chop the parsley and garlic, mix together and blend into the butter. Spread this on the pieces of meat. Add a slice each of *salame cotto* and egg and roll up, tying each with cooking twine to secure. Chop the onion, carrot and celery and lightly sauté in olive oil. Add the veal rolls and brown on all sides. Add the wine and broth; reduce the heat and cover, cooking over low heat until they are tender, about 20 minutes.



Barbera d’Alba

Translator’s note: *Salame cotto* is not to be confused with the generic English use of “salami”, a meat product often found in supermarkets outside Italy. If the authentic Piedmontese specialty is unavailable, substitute *salame cotto* with *prosciutto cotto*.



Torta di riso Savoury Rice Tart

Serves 6

Preparation: 1 1/2 hours

Baking time: 30 minutes

Preheat oven to 200°C/400° F/gas mark 6

300g (3 cups) flour – 30ml (2 tablespoons) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – water – salt – 300g (1 1/2 cups) raw rice – 1 litre (1 quart) milk – 2 eggs, slightly beaten – 50g (1/4 cup) butter – 30g (3 tablespoons) grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

A saucepan, a 30x35cm (12x14 inch) baking dish, a rolling pin, a spoon.

Mix the flour with the oil, a pinch of salt and enough water to form a smooth dough. Roll out thinly and place in the greased baking dish, setting aside a few strips of dough to decorate the top.

Heat the milk with 2g (scant 1 teaspoon) of salt and add the rice, stirring occasionally. Cook until the milk is absorbed and the rice is *al dente*. Combine the rice with the eggs, two thirds of the butter and the Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, and mix very well. Pour the mixture into the baking dish, spreading it out evenly. Fold over the borders of the dough and add the remaining strips to form a lattice design. Dot the tart

with the remaining butter and bake for approximately 30 minutes or until the surface is golden brown. Remove and let cool 15-20 minutes. Serve warm, never hot. Delicious also served cold.



Verduno Pelaverga

Translator’s note: The proportion of rice to milk is such that the rice should be perfectly cooked when the milk has been completely absorbed, thus requiring no draining.





Torta di riso e spinaci
Baked Spinach and Rice Frittata

Serves 4

Preparation: 1 hour

Baking time: 20 minutes

Preheat oven to 200°C/400° F/gas mark 6

200g (1 cup) raw rice – 60g (1/4 cup) plus 15g (1 tablespoon) butter – 500g (generous 1 lb) fresh spinach – 1/2 onion, chopped – 30ml (2 tablespoons) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 3 eggs, slightly beaten – 25g (2 tablespoons) grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

A saucepan, a heavy skillet, an oven dish, a fork, a colander.

Cook the rice in boiling salted water until *al dente*. Drain and toss with the butter. Boil the spinach, drain, and finely chop.

Heat the oil and 60g (1/4 cup) of the butter in the skillet. Add the onion, rice and spinach and sauté well. Remove from heat and add the eggs, the grated cheese, and the remaining butter. Mix well and turn into the greased baking dish. Bake until golden brown, about 20 minutes. Serve warm, never hot. This dish is also excellent cold.



Dolcetto d'Alba



Torta di ceci
Baked Chickpea Frittata

Serves 6

Preparation: 3 hours

Preheat oven to 200°C/400° F/gas mark 6

Baking time: 3/4 hour

300g (1 3/4 cup) dried chickpeas – 25g (2 tablespoons) bicarbonate of soda – 3 onions – 1 sprig of sage – a sprig of rosemary – 2 pinches salt – 2 pinches pepper – 75ml (1/3 cup) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 3 eggs – 50g (1/4 cup) grated cheese – 50g (1/4 cup) butter

A saucepan, a colander, a fork, a mixing spoon, a terracotta casserole, a baking dish.

Soak the chickpeas in water with the baking soda overnight (12 hours). Rinse well and set them to boil in enough water to cover with one finely chopped onion, sage, rosemary, salt, a pinch of pepper and oil. Simmer at least 40 minutes, until tender. Drain the pot and mash the contents with a fork.

Apart, finely chop the remaining 2 onions and sauté in olive oil until golden. Add the chickpea mixture and brown it, stirring well. Transfer the mixture into a bowl and add the eggs one at a time, mixing well after each. This step must be done rapidly otherwise the eggs will begin to cook in the hot chickpea mixture. Add the cheese and the remaining pepper. Turn into the greased baking dish and bake at 200°C/400° F/gas mark 6 for 15-20 minutes.



Dolcetto d'Alba





Torta di sangue Black Pudding

Serves 6

Preparation: 1/2 hour

Preheat oven to 190°C/375°F/gas mark 5

Cooking time: 1/2 hour

1 onion, finely chopped – 1 sprig of rosemary, finely chopped – 100g (3 1/2 oz) pork caul – 500ml (2 cups) fresh pork blood – 75ml (1/3 cup) of milk – 10g (1 tablespoon) fennel seeds, crushed – 2 pinches salt – 1 pinch pepper

A chopping knife or *mezzaluna*, a chopping board, a casserole, a fork, a knife.

Thinly slice the caul and cook it in the casserole with the onion and rosemary. Add the fennel seeds and salt and pepper to taste. When the onion is cooked remove from heat and cool to room temperature. Combine the milk and blood and add to the cooled onion mixture. Mix gently until completely blended. Pour into the top half of an ovenproof double boiler, cover securely with the lid and cook in the oven at 190°C (375°F) for 40 minutes or until it is a rich brown and small cracks appear on the surface.

Translator's note: As a substitute for pork caul the same amount of pancetta or *lardo* can be used. Originally this dish was made in a covered casserole and placed in a wood oven with hot coals on top of the lid.



Nebbiolo d'Alba



"Giuncà" Polenta and Buttermilk

Serves 10

Preparation: 24 hours

5 litres (5 quarts) whey – 1kg (2 generous lbs) polenta flour – salt – pepper

A saucepan, a skimmer, a round terrine.

Use the whey which has been drained from making *toma* (see page 148) and heat it until almost boiling. Keep it hot, but never let it boil. As the surface coagulates, skim it off and put it in the terrine. (It will have a gelatinous texture.) Season with salt and pepper and serve with polenta (see page 71).

Translator's note: In the spring milk has a particular flavour which is just right for preparing this creamy cheese, the consistency of which is something similar to yogurt.



Langhe Dolcetto





“Toma” Fresh Sheep and Goat’s Cheese

Serves 8

Preparation: ageing time 4-6 days

2 litres (2 quarts) sheep’s milk – 500ml (1 pint) goat’s milk –
2.5g (1 teaspoon) rennet - salt

A saucepan, a sieve, a *fassella* [a type of cylindrical perforated container for making cheese], a wooden spoon.

Cheese can be made with cow, sheep or goat’s milk. The classic cheese from the Alba area, *toma* is made predominantly of sheep’s milk with a little goat’s milk.

After the evening milking, filter the milk to remove any eventual straw, hairs etc.

Add the rennet and salt, mix well and leave standing until the next day (about 8-10 hours). Ideally it is left standing overnight, and in the morning the coagulated milk poured into the *fassella*.

Leave to drain in a cool place (the whey can be used to make *giuncà*, see previous recipe).

After 12 hours, invert the *fassella*, leaving the cheese inside. It should stay inverted for another 5 hours and then the cheese can be turned out onto a bed of clean straw. Over the next 5 to 6 days turn the cheese over, once in the morning and once in the evening, changing its position on the straw.



Dolcetto d’Alba



The *toma* is among the more renowned cheeses of the Piedmont, appreciated and sought after by gourmands. However, today even this traditional delicacy is in danger of being overshadowed (like so many others) by the sophistication of industrialization. These modern versions may have the same name and appearances as the genuine article, but they will never have the same unique flavour. Until a few years ago, the *toma* was made almost exclusively in farmhouses, and it always had a smooth, compact texture, regardless of who made it. But there were slight variations in consistency and colour depending on the season, where it was made, and where the cows had grazed. I remember those of the spring: milky, fresh and buttery. Those made in the summer were drier and riper, and different still were the *toma* made in the fall during mating season, when the *strop* [flocks] were united, males and females grazing together and the female goat gave in to the demands of the *bech* [male goat]. The resulting spectrum of flavours can vary as well, from lighter in the spring – like fresh milk – to more prominent in the summer, and in the fall even more pronounced.



“*Brussina*”
Soft Sheep’s Milk Cheese

Serves 20

Preparation: (in October) from 7 to 15 days

4 litres (4 quarts) sheep’s milk – 20g (1½ tablespoons) salt

A *topina* [a terracotta jar], a stripped fig branch with one unripe fig still on the tip (see note below), a clean dish towel, a dry *crotin* [cellar].

Combine the sheep’s milk with the salt, pour it in the jar and keep it in the cellar covered with the cloth.

Stir the contents every day with the fig branch. Continue for one week or more until the milk coagulates and reaches a slightly soured, creamy consistency.

Serve on polenta or on slices of homemade bread, preferably made in a wood oven.

Translator’s note: Stirring the sheep’s milk with a fig branch is important due to the substances which are released and aid in the coagulation.



Langhe Dolcetto



“*Bruss*”
Sharp Cheese Spread

Preparation time: 3 months

4 “*toma*” cheeses from the Langhe, made from sheep and goat milk – 450ml (scant 2 cups) water

A grater, a *topina* [a terracotta jar], a wooden spoon, a clean linen towel.

Grate the cheeses into the *topina*. Add the water and mix well with a wooden spoon. Cover the jar with the cloth and secure it by tying a string around the opening.

Hang the jar outside where it can be in the sun but protected by eventual wind and rain. (They used to say “*n’ sla lobia*” which means hanging on a long, narrow, covered balcony. It is still made this way today.)

Check the mixture daily and bring it indoors in the evening as the colder night air impedes the fermenting process. Mix it every day with a wooden spoon and if it hardens add a bit of water. After 3 months the flavour will be fairly strong.

“*Bruss*” is prepared in July and is ready to eat in September. It must be kept indoors when finished ageing. Though *bruss* used to be stored in the *crotin*, [cellar], today it is best kept well-covered in the refrigerator. Serve it in winter spread on bread or a warm slice of toast.



Barbera d’Alba





Zuppa inglese English Trifle

Serves 6

Preparation: 1½ hours

Refrigeration time: 6-12 hours

150g (scant 5½ oz) sponge fingers – 150ml (⅔ cup) Jamaican rum – 250g (¾ cup) apricot jam – 500g (2¼ cups) vanilla custard, following your own recipe – 150ml (⅔ cup) Alkermes (a spiced red Italian liqueur) – 150g (¾ cup) chocolate custard

A deep oval serving plate, a soup spoon.

Put a layer of sponge fingers on the bottom of the dish and drizzle them with half the rum. Follow with a layer of apricot jam and then a layer of vanilla custard. Start again with a layer of sponge fingers, but this time drizzle with the Alkermes, then a layer of jam, then the vanilla custard. The third layer of sponge fingers drizzle again with rum. Cover the top layer with the chocolate custard. Refrigerate for 6 to 12 hours and serve cold.



Asti Spumante

Translator's note: Prepare 3 cups of *crema pasticciera* [vanilla custard]. Set aside ¾ cup and add the desired amount of unsweetened cocoa powder for the chocolate custard.



It is sometimes said that the people from the Langhe (variously called the “langaroli”, “langhesi”, and “langhigiani”) are of few words. When they do engage in conversation it is usually limited to parsimonious exchanges about their work, the seasons, the vineyards, and the wine cellars. However, they let their imaginations run a bit when the topic turns to their simple yet special cuisine.

It would be hard to criticize. It is the housewives, quite often more withdrawn than their men, who are responsible for these gastronomic inventions. And though many of these recipes have become popular, who knows how and where they were invented? It would be very difficult to trace the origins of most of them. These women have given us types of *pâté* which are not *pâté*, *vitello tonnè*, which is not made with any tuna, *batsoà* which has nothing to do with silk stockings [see glossary], *grive* without thrushes [see glossary and recipes], and this *Zuppa Inglese* which is neither soup nor English. It has always been prepared in the Langhe area on special occasions, knowing that it will be appreciated. The inviting combination of lively ingredients and soft texture is even better when accompanied by a glass of sweet fizzy Moscato d’Asti.

Although there has been some research into this dessert’s origins, it will not ever be really known. Yet there are two prevailing ideas, both of which have to do with the sponge fingers. One is that it was a creation of the Savoy royal family’s kitchens, which is plausible since sponge fingers in Italian are called “*savoiardì*”. The other is that since they are also sometimes called “*inglesi*”, that this prevailed, becoming *zuppa inglese*.

Other, more complicated explanations have been offered. There is the story of a Piedmontese merchant or artisan (sometimes it is told with a soldier, or even a supporter of Garibaldi, which does not make sense due to such pesky details as dates), who found himself in Napoli where he discovered some strong liqueurs just unloaded off an English ship (here’s the connection, and indeed it is complicated!). Now this Piedmontese fellow happened to have some sponge fingers with him and managed to concoct the dessert today known to us as *zuppa inglese*. Of course it was only to be improved upon when he returned home, naturally in the able hands the women in his family. This is, today, the most widespread and accepted version of the story, complete with all the doubts that go with it.



Torta di pasta frolla Jam Tart

Serves 4

Preparation: 40 minutes

Baking time: 30 minutes

Preheat oven to 190°C/375°F/gas mark 5

300g (3 cups) flour – 200g (1 cup) sugar, plus more for sprinkling – 200g (generous ³/₄ cup) butter, plus more to grease the pie plate – 1 egg – 100g (¹/₂ cup) cherry or apricot jam – 1 egg white, lightly beaten – 100g (¹/₂ cup) crushed almonds

A shallow pie plate or quiche dish, a mixing bowl, a wooden spoon.

Mix the flour, butter, sugar and the whole egg. Roll dough out into two equal pieces. Grease the pie dish and line it with one of the sheets of pastry. If the jam is especially thick, dilute it with 30-45ml (2-3 tablespoons) warm water and then spread it evenly onto the pastry crust. Top with the other layer of dough and brush the whisked egg over the top. Sprinkle the crushed almonds and some sugar on top of the tart. Bake until golden, about 30 minutes.



Barbaresco aged 8 years

Translator's note: The general name in Italian for this tart is "*crostata*"; it figures prominently in all regions, with slight local variations.



Here is another recipe which is centuries old. When I was a child and ate Sunday lunch at my Nonna Genia's, this was always what she served for dessert. And she ate it as a little girl, as her mother prepared it, having learned the recipe from her own mother, and so on down through the generations.

It is very easy to prepare, and the ingredients are on hand in any season: flour, homemade jam, butter and sugar are always in a farmhouse kitchen. In the past, when bread was really good and was baked in the village's communal wood oven, a jam tart could be baked in between the batches of bread, when the temperature was a bit lower. And sometimes the grandmothers also made little baskets of dough stuffed with apples, or perhaps little *galuciu*, cookies that were so sweet and light.



Zabajone Zabaglione

Serves 10

Cooking time: 30 minutes

10 egg yolks – 120g (10 tablespoons) sugar – 150ml (10 tablespoons)
Moscato d'Asti

A double boiler (the upper part should have a rounded bottom), a wire whisk.

Heat all the ingredients in the double boiler, whisking constantly. Continue stirring as the mixture becomes frothy, then creamy and thickened.

Serve warm over hazelnut cake or in small dishes garnished with amaretto cookies.



Moscato naturale



Torta di nocciole Hazelnut Cake

Serves 5

Preparation: 40 minutes

Baking time: 25 minutes

Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4

11g (1 tablespoon) baking powder – 3 eggs – 100g (scant ¹/₂ cup) butter, softened to room temperature – 200g (2 cups) flour – 150g (scant 1 cup) Langhe hazelnuts – 200g (1¹/₂ cups) sugar – 15ml (1 tablespoon) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 175ml (³/₄ cup) of milk

A mixing bowl, a 22cm (9 inch) round cake pan, a wooden spoon.

Grease and flour the cake pan. Toast the hazelnuts on a cookie sheet for about 10-15 minutes and when slightly cooled grind finely. In a bowl combine the eggs, butter, sugar, baking powder, flour, hazelnuts, oil, and milk. Carefully mix, not rushing, so it all blends together. When smooth, pour into the cake pan and bake for 25 minutes.



Moscato naturale





Timballo di pere Martine Martine Pear Tart

Serves 6

Preparation: 2 hours

Cooking time, pears: 1 hour

Baking time: 1 hour

Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4

500g (generous 1 lb) Martine pears – ½ bottle full-bodied Dolcetto wine – 300g (1½ cups) sugar – 1 piece of stick cinnamon – 10 cloves – 150g (scant 1 cup) polenta flour – 75g (¾ cup) flour – 3 egg yolks – 100g (½ cup) sugar – 100g (scant ½ cup) butter

A sifter, a rolling pin, a mixing bowl, rectangular cake pan, greased and lightly floured.

Peel, core and cut the Martine pears into small pieces. Put them into a saucepan with the 300g (1½ cups) sugar, the wine, cinnamon and cloves. Cook covered for 1 hour over low heat, stirring occasionally. Let cool and remove the cloves and cinnamon stick.

Sift the cornmeal with the flour, add the egg yolks, the remaining ½ cup of sugar and the butter. When well combined roll out two sheets, 10mm (½ inch) thick. Line the cake pan with a sheet of dough and pour in the pears, cooled almost to room temperature. Cover with the second sheet of dough and bake for 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4 for 10-15 minutes. Increase the heat to 190°C/375°F/gas mark 5, and bake another 20-25 minutes, or until the crust is golden brown.



Barbaresco aged at least 8 years



Translator's note: The Martine pear is a variety indigenous to the Langhe. Its fruit is very small, hard and quite dry, making it ill-suited for eating but good for cooking in various dishes, such as Cognà (see page 139).

This delicious dessert is from the 1800's and was popular among middle-class households. The vivid red pears featured in the recipe are very small and grow on twisted branches that are almost devoid of leaves by the time the fruit is ripe. They have a pleasant flavour, and when cooked in good wine they soften but retain their shape since they are rather dry but rich in sugar.



Tartara dolce Lemon Almond Cream

Serves 6

Preparation: 1/2 hour

Cooking time: 1 hour

4 egg yolks – 70g (6 tablespoons) sugar – 500ml (2 cups) boiled milk – the peel of 1 lemon – 6 bitter almonds (see note, below) – 50g (1/2 cup) sweet almonds

A double boiler (the upper part should have a rounded bottom), a whisk, a mortar, a deep round, serving dish.

Grind all the almonds and set aside. Whisk the yolks and the sugar together in the double boiler until pale and frothy. In another saucepan heat the milk till just warm with the lemon peel. Add this to the egg yolk mixture and continue heating, stirring constantly to obtain a creamy consistency. Thoroughly mix in the ground almonds. Serve cold in small bowls, garnished with butter cookies.

Translator's note: In Italy very small amounts of bitter almonds are traditionally added to some desserts for the unique flavour they impart. However, due to its cyanide content the bitter almond's use gastronomically is fairly limited today and it may be difficult to obtain outside of Italy. They can be omitted from the recipe without adverse effect.



Barolo aged 10 years



Pesche ripiene Stuffed Baked Peaches

Serves 5

Preparation: 30 minutes

Baking time: 1 hour

Preheat oven to 160°C/325°F/gas mark 3

10 peaches – 35g (3 tablespoons) sugar - 5 amaretto cookies – 2 egg yolks – 20g (2 tablespoons) unsweetened cocoa powder – butter – 4 peach kernels

A cutting board, a large chopping knife, a paring knife, a terracotta oven dish.

Wash, pat dry and halve the peaches without peeling them. Remove the pits, discarding 1 and removing the kernel from the other four; finely crush them and set aside. Carefully scoop out a bit of the flesh from each peach half and finely chop. Add the sugar, cocoa powder, crushed amaretto cookies, egg yolks and crushed peach kernels. Mix well and fill the peach halves, topping with more amaretto crumbs and butter shavings. Place the peaches in a greased oven dish and bake for one hour at 160°C/325°F/gas mark 3. Serve hot or warm, never cold.

Translator's note: In Piedmont peach kernels are used for this recipe; ground almonds make an excellent substitute.



Moscato naturale





Pere cotte al forno Baked Pears

Serves 7

Baking time: 40 minutes

Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4

21 Madernassa pears – 200g (1 cup) sugar

An oven dish, a paring knife

Stand the pears in the oven dish, stem up, and bake them for 40 minutes. When removed from the oven, sprinkle with sugar and serve warm.

Translator's note: The Madernassa pear, like the Martine variety used in other recipes, is native to the Langhe and not found outside Italy. Choose a small variety of pear which is hard, rather dry, and more suited for lengthy cooking than eating raw. This dish was originally made in a wood oven.



Piemonte Brachetto



Paste di meliga Polenta Cookies

Yield: to serve 6

Preparation: 40 minutes

Baking time: 25 minutes

Preheat oven to 190°C/375°F/gas mark 5

300g (3 cups) flour – 100g (generous 1/2 cup) polenta flour – 300g (1 1/3 cups) butter – 200g (1 cup) sugar – 2 egg yolks – 2.5g (1 teaspoon) grated lemon peel

A mixing bowl, a wooden spoon, a round cookie cutter, a cookie sheet.

Combine all the ingredients together and mix well until a smooth dough is formed. Roll the dough out, cut with the cookie cutter and place on the greased cookie sheet. Bake for 12-15 minutes or until golden brown.

Translator's note: Lining the cookie sheet with baking parchment paper is a shortcut that was not available in Nonna Genia's day. Its use will alleviate the necessity of greasing the cookie sheet while also facilitating easier removal of the cookies from the baking surface.



Barbaresco aged 8 years





Panna cotta Panna cotta

Serves 6

Preparation: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 15 minutes

Refrigeration time: 12 hours

500g (2 cups) heavy cream – 200g (1 cup) plus 60g ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup) sugar – 5ml (1 teaspoon) pure vanilla extract – 7g ($1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons) unflavoured powdered gelatine, or $2\frac{1}{2}$ sheets of unflavoured gelatine – 50ml ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) milk, warmed – 150ml ($\frac{2}{3}$ cup) rum – 6 pineapple slices

A heavy saucepan, a small saucepan, 6 individual ramekins.

In the saucepan heat the cream and 200g (1 cup) sugar together until the sugar dissolves, at the point when the cream is nearly at a boil. Remove from heat. In a small bowl dissolve the gelatine in the milk and add to the cream and sugar mixture. Add the vanilla extract and rum and mix well.

In another saucepan, mix 60g ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup) sugar with 150ml ($\frac{2}{3}$ cup) water. Cook over low heat until it becomes golden brown. Let cool a few minutes and divide it among the ramekins. Carefully pour the cream mixture into the ramekins.

Refrigerate at least 12 hours to set. Garnish with pineapple slices or, when in season, fresh raspberries or strawberries.

Translator's note: If gelatine sheets are used, soften in cold water for about 5 minutes. Squeeze it out and dissolve in a small amount of warm (not hot) milk, then add it to the cream and sugar mixture.



Asti Spumante



Marrons glacés Marrons Glacés

Preparation: approximately 5 days

1kg chestnuts (generous 2 lbs) – 500-700g ($2\frac{1}{2}$ to $3\frac{1}{2}$ cups) sugar – approximately 500-700ml (2 to 3 cups) water – vanilla flavoured confectioner's sugar

Two deep heavy pots, a serving platter.

Remove the prickly outer shell from the chestnuts and place them in a pot with enough water to cover. Place on low heat and when it comes to a boil continue to simmer another 10-15 minutes. Drain and carefully peel the chestnuts, taking care they remain whole, weigh them and put them in a clean pot.

Make a syrup of water and sugar using the following proportions: for every 500g (generous 1 lb) of cooked, cleaned chestnuts, use 500g (generous 1 lb) sugar, mixed with 500ml (2 cups) water. Bring to a boil and cook until the sugar is dissolved; continue cooking until it forms a syrup. Pour into the pot with the chestnuts, bring again to a boil and let simmer 20 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand 24 hours. Repeat this step four times, each time letting the chestnuts stand in the syrup for 24 hours, without the addition of other liquid. When cooled for the last time drain the chestnuts from the syrup, arrange them on a serving platter, and dust with vanilla flavoured confectioner's sugar.

Translator's note: To make vanilla sugar, use 2 whole vanilla beans for every 500g (generous 1 lb) of confectioner's sugar. Make an incision the length of the vanilla pods and mix the pods into the sugar. Store in an airtight container for about two weeks until the sugar takes on a vanilla flavour.



Barolo aged 10 years





Bugie Sweet Lies

Preparation and cooking time: 1½ hours

500g (5 cups) flour – 15g (4 teaspoons) baking powder – 50g (¼ cup) butter, melted – 2 egg yolks – 25g (2 tablespoons) sugar – a pinch of salt – 150ml (⅔ cup) milk – 1 litre (1 quart) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – confectioner’s sugar flavoured with vanilla

A rolling pin, a heavy skillet, a skimmer, paper towel, a sugar sprinkler

Sift the flour with the baking powder onto the work surface. Add the melted butter, egg yolks, sugar, salt and milk and work into a smooth dough.

Roll the dough out to not more than 6mm (¼ inch) thick and cut into diamond shapes with a pasta cutter or knife.

Heat the oil in the skillet and when very hot fry the dough in batches. When golden brown, remove to drain on paper towel. Dust with confectioner’s sugar and serve immediately.

Translator’s note: “*Bugie*” is the Italian word for “lies”. During the period of Carnevale this treat is made all over Italy. Although the oil indicated here for frying is extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil, today peanut oil is often used. See page 165 (Marrons Glacés) to make vanilla flavoured confectioner’s sugar.



Barolo aged 10 years



“Fricciu” con mele Apple Fritters

Serves 10

Preparation and cooking time: 2½ hours

1kg (10 cups) flour – 150ml (10 tablespoons) extra-virgin Ligurian olive oil – 10 eggs – dry white wine – 2 lemons – pinch of salt – 35g (3 tablespoons) sugar – 3 Renette or other tart apples, cored, peeled and thinly sliced – 20g (1 tablespoon) dry active yeast – 1 litre (1 quart) extra-virgin olive oil or other oil for frying, such as sunflower or peanut

A heavy skillet, a *grilèt* [large mixing bowl], a whisk, a mixing spoon, paper towel.

Put the flour, egg yolks and the 150ml (10 tablespoons) olive oil into the mixing bowl and add enough wine to work into a soft paste. Dissolve the yeast in 3ml (3 tablespoons) warm water, mix well and let sit for 10 minutes until the surface is foamy. Add the yeast (including the foam), the lemon peel, the sugar and salt to the flour mixture. Stir well for 10 minutes and set aside, covered, for two hours.

Slightly beat the egg whites and delicately mix them into the batter. Add the apples and mix gently until well combined.

Drop by spoonfuls into the hot oil. When puffy and golden brown remove them to drain on the paper towel. Sprinkle with sugar and serve hot.



Asti Spumante





“Bonèt” Chocolate Flan

Serves 4

Preparation: 45 minutes

Baking time: 1 hour

Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4

Refrigeration time: 3 hours

4 eggs – 65g (8 tablespoons) confectioner’s sugar – 150ml (²/₃ cup) warm milk – 30g (¹/₂ cup) crushed amaretto cookies – 7g (1 tablespoon) unsweetened cocoa powder – 30ml (2 tablespoons) rum – 60g (5 tablespoons) granulated sugar

A mixing bowl, a whisk, a wooden spoon, small saucepan, a narrow metal loaf mould, a large cake pan, a serving platter.

Whisk the eggs with the confectioner’s sugar. Add the warm milk, the crushed amaretto cookies, cocoa powder and rum. Mix well with the wooden spoon or whisk.

In the saucepan combine the sugar with just enough water to dissolve it. Cook the sugar over low to moderate heat, without stirring, until it becomes golden. Remove from heat and pour into the mould, rotating it carefully so the syrup completely coats the inside.

Allow the mould to cool completely and then carefully pour in the other mixture. Place the mould in a cake pan and pour boiling water around the mould so it is three-quarters immersed. Bake 1 hour. Remove from oven, cool to room temperature and refrigerate at least 3 hours. Turn out on the serving platter and serve cold.



Moscato naturale d’Asti



Over the years, as my *Mare Granda* got older, making *tjarin* got to be a tiring endeavour for her. It was hard for her to flatten out of the pasta with the rolling pin after having mixed the dough together. Besides, there was a grown granddaughter or her son’s young bride who was capable of doing it. She considered herself retired from the kitchen, but she was still always present, observing and attentive, watching what another was doing where she had reigned for so long. And every so often she would help out, as long as it was not something too difficult, like this *bonèt*. She had, with age, acquired something of a sweet tooth and this dessert really satisfied her cravings; of course, everyone else loved it as well. She would say she was making it for her grandchildren, but she loved making it because of the whole long preparation, imagining how it would taste while it slowly cooked on a corner of her big *putagè* [woodstove] for hours, a soft bubbling murmur keeping her company. And while it cooked sometimes she would nap, dreaming of distant times when she waited in her kitchen tending the pots and kettles, awaiting the arrival of her family from the fields and vineyards.

Such fond memories. Today’s grandmothers chat on the phone with their friends or spend hours at the hair dresser. They talk about politics and the economy and watch a lot of television (but, who doesn’t?) – and of course there is always a series of errands to be done racing around in the car. This is not necessarily all bad: a new era, a new lifestyle! But in the past there was such peace and tranquillity.



Torrone d'Alba Alba Nougat

Preparation: 4 hours
Cooking time: 9 hours

2.5 kg (7¹/₃ cups) organic honey – 1kg (5¹/₄ cups) sugar – 300ml (3/4 cup) golden syrup – 300g (1¹/₃ cups) egg white – 2.5ml (1/2 teaspoon) pure vanilla extract – 2.5kg (5¹/₂ lbs) toasted Langhe hazelnuts – sheets of *ostia* or rice wafer paper, enough to line the cake pan

A double boiler (the upper part should have a rounded bottom), a large wooden spoon, a large rectangular cake pan.

Heat the honey, sugar and golden syrup in the double boiler and stir well on medium-high heat for 2 hours. Add the egg whites and continue to mix on low heat for seven hours.

Add the warm, freshly toasted hazelnuts and the vanilla, taking care to blend evenly. Line the cake pan with the rice paper and pour in the mixture. Spread it out evenly with a rubber spatula and cover with another layer of rice paper. When it is still rather warm turn the nougat out of the pan, cut into strips and serve.

This recipe made from honey, sugar and hazelnuts can be traced back to the 1800's, when the austere cuisine of the Langhe started becoming richer and more elegant.

Translator's note: Rice wafer paper, or "*ostia*" in Italian, can be found in Italian specialty shops.



Asti Spumante



Albesi al Barolo Alba Kisses

Preparation: 1¹/₂ hours
Preheat oven to 190°C/375°F/gas mark 5
Baking time: 20 minutes
Assembly: 25 minutes

550g (2³/₄ cups sugar) – 250g (9 oz) Langhe hazelnuts, lightly toasted – 60g (1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder – 5 egg whites – 300ml (1¹/₃ cups) good aged Barolo wine – 6g (1¹/₂ teaspoons) baking powder – 100g (3¹/₂ oz) semisweet chocolate – 50g (1/4 cup) butter

A mortar and pestle, a mixing bowl, a wooden spoon, a double boiler, a cookie sheet lined with baking parchment.

Spread out the in a baking pan hazelnuts and place in a 190°C/375°F/gas mark 5 oven for 10 minutes. Remove when lightly toasted and reduce the oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4. While still warm finely grind the hazelnuts together with the sugar with the mortar and pestle. Add the egg whites, cocoa powder and Barolo.

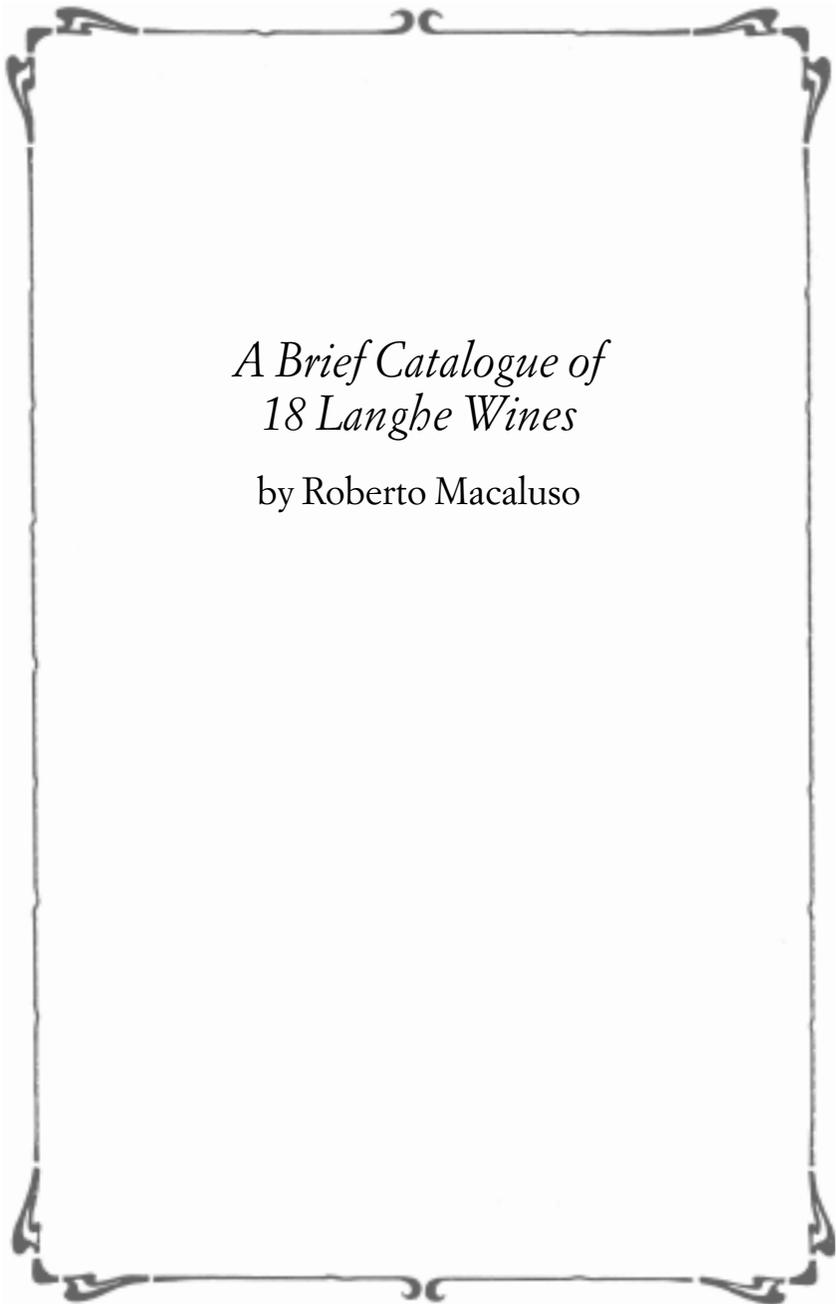
Place the mixture in small spoonfuls onto the cookie sheet. Let sit 2-3 hours, and then bake for 15-20 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool completely. In the top half of the double boiler combine the chocolate and butter, stirring until smooth. When cooled to room temperature, spread small spoonful of the chocolate mixture on the flat side of a cookie and make a sandwich by adding another cookie. Leave the finished "kisses" to stand another 2-3 hours before serving.

Translator's note: "*Baci di dama*" [lady's kisses] are a confection that is found all over Piedmont; this is the Alba version and it distinguishes itself with the use of aged (and therefore expensive) Barolo in its ingredients. The "kisses" can be kept up to 10 days in an airtight container.



Barolo aged 10 years



A decorative rectangular border with ornate, symmetrical scrollwork at each corner and mid-point of the sides, framing the text.

*A Brief Catalogue of
18 Langhe Wines*

by Roberto Macaluso

Dolcetto d'Alba DOC July 6, 1974

Dolcetto di Diano d'Alba DOC May 3, 1974

Langhe Dolcetto DOC Novembre 11, 1994

Dolcetto di Dogliani DOC June 26, 1974 (DOCG since July 6, 2005 only for "Superiore")

Recommended serving temperature: 14-16°C (57-60°F)

Viticulture Notes

This is certainly the most common grape variety in the Alba area. It is mentioned in documents dating as far back 1593 (minutes of the Dogliani Town Council Meetings) and is enjoyed as a table grape for its high sugar content. In the past, Dolcetto grape cures were popular. This grape ripens in the second half of September, in medium to large elongated bunches with loosely packed, oval berries of varying sizes which have a consistent bluish-violet skin.

It is cultivated in a large and varied geographical area, producing several DOC wines such as Dolcetto d'Alba, Dolcetto di Diano and Langhe Dolcetto. This area covers 2,500 hectares and yields over 220,000 quintals of grapes.

The Dolcetto d'Alba production area includes the entire territory of the municipalities of Alba, Albaretto della Torre, Arguello, Barolo, Benevello, Borgomale, Bosia, Camo, Castiglione Falletto, Castiglione Tinella, Castino, Cossano Belbo, Grinzane Cavour, Lequio Berria, Mango, Monforte d'Alba, Montelupo Albese, Neviglie, Rocchetta Belbo, Rodello, Santo Stefano Belbo, Serralunga d'Alba, Sinio, Treiso, Trezzo and Tinella, and also includes a portion of the territory on the right side (east side) of the Tanaro River which includes the municipalities of Barbaresco, Neive, Novello, Narzole, Cherasco, La Morra, Verduno, a portion of the territory of the municipality of Roddino situated on the right east side of the Riavolo stream as well as part of the municipality of Torre Bormida and Cortemilia.

The production area of Dolcetto di Diano d'Alba includes the entire territory of the municipality of Diano d'Alba.

For the production areas of Langhe Dolcetto consult File 8 which is dedicated to the Langhe denomination.

The production area of Dolcetto di Dogliani includes the municipalities of Clavesana, Dogliani and Farigliano as well as a large part of Bastia Mondovì, Belvedere Langhe, Cigliè, Monchiero, Roccacigliè, Roddino and Somano, representing a total cultivated area of 970 hectares and production of over 55,000 quintals of grapes.

Technical Notes

For the sake of brevity all the characteristics of the above denominations of Dolcetto wine have been grouped together here. Dolcetto wine has a winy and fruity nose making it popular among connoisseurs. It is not usually suitable for ageing and can be drunk from the spring following the crushing. There are, however, special zones which lend themselves particularly well to bottle ageing with surprising results.

Dolcetto has subtle variations depending on the zone: it can be a more or less intense ruby red colour with purplish highlights. It goes well with any dish and is particularly appropriate for delicate stomachs because of its low acidity. Its bouquet recalls ripe grapes; it is always dry, fresh, slightly bitter and moderately alcoholic.

Gastronomy

This is a dry, lively and cheerful wine from old traditions; a great country wine, sociable and friendly, suitable for serving with *salumi* [charcuterie], tagliatelle, poultry and cheese.

Barbera d'Alba DOC May 27, 1970

Piemonte Barbera DOC November 22, 1994

2

Recommended serving temperature: young, 14-16°C (57-60°F) aged, 18°C (64°F)

Viticulture Notes

The popularity of this variety in the Langhe has exceeded that of many others due to its strength and excellent productivity.

It is characterized by compact, medium-size bunches which are cylindrical-pyramidal shaped, often with side clusters; its blue-black berries ripen in early October.

The area of cultivation is vast and includes both sides of the Tanaro River and, depending on the area where it is grown; the resulting wine can be suited for early drinking or ageing.

There are about 2,300 hectares dedicated to the Barbera grape with a yield of over 200,000 quintals of fruit. The cultivated zone includes the entire area of the municipalities of Alba, Albaretto della Torre, Barbaresco, Barolo, Borgomale, Camo, Canale, Castagnito, Castellinaldo, Castiglione Falletto, Castiglione Tinella, Castino, Corneliano d'Alba, Cossano Belbo, Diano d'Alba, Govone, Grinzane Cavour, Guarene, Magliano Alfieri, Mango, Monforte d'Alba, Montelupo Albese, Monticello d'Alba, Neive, Neviglie, Novello, Perletto, Piobesi, Priocca, Rocchetta Belbo, Roddi, Roddino, Rodello, S. Stefano Belbo, Santa Vittoria d'Alba, Serralunga d'Alba, Sinio, Treiso, Trezzo Tinella, Verduno, Vezza d'Alba and some land in the municipalities of Baldissero, Bra, Cortemilia, Cherasco, La Morra, Monchiero, Montà d'Alba, Montaldo Roero, Narzole, Pocalaglia, Santo Stefano Roero and Sommariva Perno.

See File 9 for the production zone of "Barbera Piemonte" covering the Piemonte denominations.

Technical Notes

This is one of the most popular dry robust wines. Depending on its origin it can be suitable for ageing; those from Barolo in

particular are influenced by the soil in that area, earning the name “*baroleggi*” [Barolo-like]. Other Barberas (especially from Guarene and Govone) can be drunk while still young and are of an intense ruby-red colour which takes on a garnet hue with ageing.

This wine can accompany any dish thanks to its versatility refined by the sunshine of the Langhe. It is characterized by a distinct winy perfume while still young which recalls bubbling vats during harvest time. Some special batches can be aged in wood, either traditional barrels or barriques, thereby allowing the wine to develop particular characteristics that are highly appreciated.

Gastronomy

This is a wine which brings out the best in any meal! With its sensational bright red hue it exudes a chorus of the essence of grapes family tradition. Highly suited for accompanying roast rabbit, fried foods, *bollito misto*, and hard aged cheeses.

Nebbiolo d’Alba DOC May 28, 1970

Roero DOCG December 7, 2004

Langhe Nebbiolo DOC November 22, 1994

Recommended serving temperature: 18°C (64°F)

Viticulture Notes

The Nebbiolo grape is one of the oldest varieties cultivated in the Piemonte region. It is the last grape of the season to ripen. The bunches are rather compact, small or medium sized, elongated, and pyramid-shaped. The blue-black grape is medium small, oval shaped, has quite a thick skin with noticeable bloom.

The only wine which retains the name of the Nebbiolo grape is Nebbiolo d’Alba, which is produced in a vast area partially including the east side of the Tanaro river but with the majority being grown on the west side.

The following municipalities are included in their entirety in this area: Canale, Castellinaldo, Corneliano d’Alba, Monticello d’Alba, Piobesi, Priocca, Sinio, Santa Vittoria d’Alba, and Vezza d’Alba, as well as parts of the territories of Alba, Bra, Baldissero, Castagnito, Diano d’Alba, Guarene, Magliano Alfieri, Montà d’Alba, Montaldo Roero, Monteu Roero, Pocapaglia, Santo Stefano Roero, Sommariva Perno, Grinzane Cavour, La Morra, Roddi, Verduno, Novello, Monforte d’Alba, Roddino, Montelupo Albese, and Monchiero. The particular composition of the soil (predominantly yellow sand) gives this wine its distinctive valuable characteristics. There are more than 700 hectares devoted to Nebbiolo cultivation, yielding over 60,000 quintals of grapes.

Roero wine comes from a more limited zone within the area of Nebbiolo, on the west side of the Tanaro River. The name Roero derives from that of a prominent family of feudal lords. The area of cultivation includes all or parts of Baldissero, Canale, Castagnito, Castellinaldo, Corneliano d’Alba, Govone, Guarene, Montà d’Alba, Montaldo Roero, Monteu Roero, Monticello d’Alba, Piobesi, Pocapaglia, Priocca, Santa Vittoria d’Alba, S. Stefano Roero, Sommariva Perno, Vezza d’Alba.

Consult File 8 for the production zone of Langhe Nebbiolo which refers to the Langhe denomination.

Technical Notes

This is a particularly harmonious wine with a pleasant, floral, spicy and fruity nose. It can be drunk relatively young or after a moderate ageing period. The colour is intense ruby-red. Documents dating from the 1600's indicate that the Savoy royal family kept a supply of Nebbiolo in their cellars.

Gastronomy

This wine has an exceptionally delicate bouquet and refined flavour which can accompany various dishes, but is best paired with *fonduta*.

Barbaresco DOCG July 1, 1980 (DOC since April 23, 1966)

4

Recommended serving temperature: 18-20°C (64-68°F)

Viticulture Notes

Barbaresco wine is obtained from vines growing on spurs overlooking the Tanaro river in the Barbaresco district that cover the territories of Neive and Treiso and a small part of Alba (San Rocco Seno d'Elvio). The name was given to this wine in 1890 by Professor Domizio Cavazza, director of the *Reale Scuola Enologica di Alba* [The Royal Oenological School of Alba].

Technical Notes

Obligatory ageing of at least two years, one of which in casks. The colour is garnet-red with orangey highlights and it has an intense delicate perfume of violets. It is an austere yet velvety and harmonious wine.

Poetical Notes

The Barbaresco tower recalls the barbaric invasions of Mohammed's followers. One can imagine their temptation to ignore the Koran's rules and taste this delicious wine which was part of their booty as conquerors. It is a legendary wine, almost mythical. It is distinct itself from all other wines because of its strong character. Although it is suitable for lively banquets, it really requires special attention from the connoisseur. In the glass it brings friendship and civilization, history and memories, it is sipped with soul, in deep concentration to discover the taste of the thousands of forgotten rays of the sun.

Gastronomy

Elegance and discretion are the virtues of Barbaresco. Although it is excellent with food, especially feathered game and delicate roasts, it shows its captivating persuasion when drunk on its own.

Barolo DOCG July 1, 1980 (DOC since April 23, 1966)

5

Recommended serving temperature: 18-20°C (64-68°F)

Viticulture Notes

Barolo wine is obtained from the Nebbiolo varietal which is thought to be among the oldest varieties in the area (it has been cited as far back as 1512 “Nebiolium” in the city records La Morra). The Lampia, Michet and Rosè varieties are cultivated in Barolo, Castiglione Falletto, Serralunga d’Alba in their entirety, and in parts of Monforte (including Perno and Castelletto), Novello, La Morra, Verduno, Grinzane Cavour, Diano d’Alba, Cherasco and Roddi for a total area of 1,250 hectares and a maximum yield of 100,000 quintals of grapes.

Technical Notes

Obligatory ageing of at least three years, two of which in casks. Garnet red with orange highlights and an intense, robust, but also harmoniously velvety bouquet.

Poetical Notes

Barolo sums up the greatness of the Langhe.

The taste of this land can be perceived by the subtle sensations this wine creates on the palate: the breeze which sings among the vines plays the tense wires supporting the vines like a harp, each time creating new and unique melodies.

But Barolo wine is even more than this. It is purity, memory and dreams. Its land is full of castles and history which exalt the mysterious production cycle: the esterification, oxidation, and the resinification; a few words which represent years of work.

After at least three years of ageing a diamond purity and particular tonality of light can be glimpsed. But if left to age bit longer it will become pleasantly austere and regal. Its exceptional balance and perfume of slightly wilted roses is best appreciated in moments of tranquillity and reflection.

Gastronomy

A strong wine for strong people, it is excellent with roasts, furred game and strong cheeses. Barolo is a wine which dominates refined tables, offering unique and exceptional sensations to the palate.

Moscato d'Asti**Asti** DOCG Novembre 29, 1993 (DOC since July 9, 1967)

Recommended serving temperature: 5-6°C (41-43°F)

Viticulture Notes

This is one of the most important vines of our area, specifically the provinces of Alessandria and Asti from where it gets its name. It bears white grapes which ripen around the third week of September. The bunches are medium sized and not too compact. The grapes are medium sized and spherical with skin that is rather thin and greenish-yellow, becoming amber-gold when exposed to the sun.

The pre-eminent aromatic and heavily scented perfumed used in making Asti Spumante and Moscato d'Asti.

The territories with the highest quality production are Mango, Camo, Castiglione Tinella and Santo Stefano Belbo. There are over 4,000 hectares under cultivation in the area around Alba yielding about 400,000 quintals of fruit.

Cultivation in the province of Cuneo includes the entire territories of Camo, Castiglione Tinella, Cossano Belbo, Mango, Neive, Neviglie, Rocchetta Belbo, Serralunga d'Alba, Santo Stefano Belbo, Santa Vittoria d'Alba, Treiso, Trezzo Tinella, Borgomale, Castino, Perletto as well as the hamlets of Como and San Rocco Seno d'Elvio in the municipality of Alba.

Technical Notes

From special grapes come special wines with moderate alcohol content, achieved through the correct cellar techniques. Both Asti Spumante and Moscato d'Asti are produced following stringent guidelines; Moscato d'Asti has a higher sugar content and is only slightly sparkling.

Asti Spumante is a delicate golden colour, fine perlage, persistent intense perfume and aromatic taste.

Moscato d'Asti is an intense golden colour, fragrant perfume and a sweet fruity flavour.

These are dessert wines but can be enjoyed anytime; they are always served cold.

Moscato Passito is a non-sparkling dessert wine made from Moscato grapes that have been dried before crushing. It is produced in limited quantities in the Moscato d'Asti areas and also in those of Borgomale and Cortemilia.

Gastronomy

These wines are a must for celebrating happy occasions; they are served at just the right moment, adding to the joy and good cheer. They remind us of past times when people received guests and celebrated happy occasions by bringing out their special biscuit tins and sharing a glass of Asti.

Roero Arneis DOC January 31, 1989

Langhe Arneis DOC November 22, 1994

Recommended serving temperature: 10-11°C (50-52°F)

Viticulture Notes

This is a white grape variety from the Alba area and probably originates from the west side of the Tanaro River.

The vine flourishes best when planted in soft ground, with good exposure to the sun. The bunches are small to medium sized, pyramid shaped, compact with small oval grapes which are greenish-yellow, becoming where exposed to the sun.

Roero Arneis is produced in the municipalities of Baldissero d'Alba, Canale, Castagnito, Castellinaldo, Corneliano d'Alba, Govone, Guarene, Montà, Montaldo Roero, Monteu Roero, Monticello d'Alba, Piobesi d'Alba, Pocapaglia, Priocca, Santa Vittoria d'Alba, Santo Stefano Roero, Sommariva Perno and Vezza d'Alba.

Langhe Arneis is produced in the above mentioned areas as well as in the municipalities of Alba, Barbaresco, Diano d'Alba, Grinzane Cavour, Mango, Neive, Neviglie, Rodello, Roddi, Trezzo Tinella, Treiso and Verduno.

The total area under cultivation of Arneis is 450 hectares giving a yield of 30,000 quintals of grapes.

Technical Notes

Arneis has become popular quite recently and enjoys overwhelming success. Initially there were only a few vines sparsely planted, but now hundreds of hectares of vineyards are dedicated to this wine, which is surprising in an area famous for red wines.

Originally Arneis was blended with other white grapes, but in the 1970's it was vinified separately; modern wine making techniques have given us a pleasant traditional wine which has conquered innumerable consumers both in Italy and abroad.

The wine is pale yellow with greenish highlights, rich in

primary aromas and has a persistent flowery perfume. Its fruity taste reminds one of peaches, apricots and melons.

It should be drunk young.

Gastronomy

Excellent as an aperitif and suitable for cold starters, it is perfect with asparagus or fish. It should not to be drunk too cold.

These wines have the geographical denomination “Langhe” and the name of the vine is included in their title: Langhe Nebbiolo, Langhe Dolcetto, Langhe Freisa, Langhe Favorita, Langhe Chardonnay, and Langhe Arneis. They must contain at least 85% of the named grape.

Wines which bear the name “Langhe”, whether they are red or white can be obtained from more than one grape as long as it has a similar type of skin and colour, as long as they are not aromatic and the vintners are recognized or authorized by the province of Cuneo.

The production area for Langhe Arneis has been indicated in its file. Following is a list for all the other above-mentioned denominations: Alba, Albaretto Torre, Arguello, Baldissero d’Alba, Barbaresco, Barolo, Bastia Mondovì, Belvedere Langhe, Benevello, Bergolo, Bonvicino, Borgomale, Bosia, Bossolasco, Bra, Briaglia, Camo, Canale d’Alba, Carrù, Castagnito, Castellinaldo, Castellino Tanaro, Castiglione Falletto, Castiglione Tinella, Castino, Ceretto Langhe, Cherasco, Cigliè, Cissone, Clavesana, Corneliano d’Alba, Cortemilia, Cossano Belbo, Cravanzana, Diano d’Alba, Dogliani, Farigliano, Feisoglio, Gorzegno, Govone, Grinzane Cavour, Guarene, Igliano, La Morra, Lequio Berria, Levice, Magliano Alfieri, Mango, Marsaglia, Mombarcaro, Monchiero, Mondovì, Monforte d’Alba, Montà d’Alba, Montaldo Roero, Montelupo Albese, Monteu Roero, Monticello d’Alba, Murazzano, Narzole, Neive, Neviglie, Niella Belbo, Niella Tanaro, Novello, Perletto, Pezzolo Valle Uzzone, Piobesi d’Alba, Piozzo, Pocapaglia, Priocca, Prunetto, Roachio, Rocca Cigliè, Rocchetta Belbo, Roddi, Roddino, Rodello, San Benedetto Belbo, San Michele Mondovì, Santa Vittoria d’Alba, Santo Stefano Belbo, Santo Stefano Roero, Serralunga d’Alba, Serravalle Langhe, Sinio, Somano, Sommaria Perno, Torre Bormida, Treiso, Trezzo Tinella, Verduno, Vezza d’Alba, Vicoforte.

Viticulture Notes

As already stated, the denomination of “Langhe”, without any other specification, is reserved for red or white wines made from grape varieties of the same colour that are non-aromatic and have been authorized by the province of Cuneo.

The DOC label has been given to a wide range of wines obtained from different varieties that vary in taste and bouquet according to the ability and flair of the individual producer. Our traditional varieties like Barbera, Dolcetto and Nebbiolo have been matched with those of other origins such as Pinot Nero, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon, Chardonnay, White Sauvignon, Red Riesling and many others to obtain wines of interesting assemblage or have been vinified in their purity.

Technical Notes and Gastronomy

Please refer to the respective files for the technical notes and combinations of food and wines for all the denominations of Langhe wines which have the variety specified in their title.

It is not possible to give wine-food combinations for all the other wines with the denomination “Langhe” because there are too many and they vary too much in taste. Some are important and austere, and others are fresh and fruity, so matching the wine to food should be done on a case by case basis, remembering the importance of the serving temperature.

“Piemonte” Denomination

DOC wines (since November 22, 1994)

9

d’Alba, Santo Stefano Belbo, Serralunga d’Alba, Treiso, Trezzo Tinella.

These wines have the name of the variety included in their denomination immediately after the word “Piemonte”.

Piemonte Barbera, Piemonte Bonarda, Piemonte Grignolino must contain at least 85% of the variety indicated on the label. The production area covers the entire territory of the municipalities of: Alba, Albaretto Torre, Arguello, Baldissero d’Alba, Barbaresco, Barolo, Bastia Mondovì, Belvedere Langhe, Benevello, Bergolo, Bonvicino, Borgomale, Bosia, Bossolasco, Bra, Briaglia, Camo, Canale d’Alba, Carrù, Castagnito, Castellinaldo, Castellino Tanaro, Castiglione Falletto, Castiglione Tinella, Castino, Ceretto Langhe, Cherasco, Cigliè, Cissone, Clavesana, Corneliano d’Alba, Cortemilia, Cossano Belbo, Cravanzana, Diano d’Alba, Dogliani, Farigliano, Feisoglio, Gorzegno, Govone, Grinzane Cavour, Guarene, Iglia, La Morra, Lequio Berria, Levice, Magliano Alfieri, Mango, Marsaglia, Mombarcaro, Monchiero, Mondovì, Monforte d’Alba, Montà d’Alba, Montaldo Roero, Montelupo Albese, Monteu Roero, Monticello d’Alba, Murazzano, Narzole, Neive, Neviglie, Niella Belbo, Niella Tanaro, Novello, Perletto, Pezzolo Valle Uzzone, Piobesi d’Alba, Piozzo, Pocapaglia, Priocca, Prunetto, Roascio, Rocca Cigliè, Rocchetta Belbo, Roddi, Roddino, Rodello, San Benedetto Belbo, S. Michele Mondovì, Santa Vittoria d’Alba, Santo Stefano Belbo, Santo Stefano Roero, Serralunga d’Alba, Serravalle Langhe, Sinio, Somano, Sommariva Perno, Torre Bormida, Treiso, Trezzo Tinella, Verduno, Vezza d’Alba, Vicoforte.

Piemonte Brachetto wine must be made from at least 85% of Brachetto grapes.

Piemonte Moscato and Piemonte Moscato Passito must be made from 100% white Moscato grapes. The production area covers the whole territory of the municipalities of Alba, Borgomale, Camo, Castiglione Tinella, Castino, Cortemilia, Cossano Belbo, Mango, Neive, Neviglie, Perletto, Rocchetta Belbo, Santa Vittoria

Recommended serving temperature: 15-16°C (59-61°F)

Viticulture Notes

This particular variety is most likely related to Nebbiolo and has similar shaped bunches but it ripens earlier.

More than 60 hectares of Freisa are cultivated in the Alba area, both on the east and west sides of the Tanaro River. It can also be found in most parts of southwest Piemonte although it is never the dominant grape cultivated in those areas. Please consult File 8 for the list of municipalities under cultivation.

Freisa bunches are aesthetically inviting but have a rather sour flavour. In the past there was a tradition of planting a couple of rows of Freisa along the road near a Moscato vineyard in order to discourage passers-by from tasting the sweet Moscato grapes.

Technical Notes

This wine has an intense ruby-red colour and sharp acidity. It is a lively wine with a characteristic raspberry taste when young.

It was traditionally bottled during the first new moon of spring while still a bit sweet and then left to re-ferment in the bottle into a perfumed sparkling wine.

It is sometimes served as a dry still wine after brief ageing, but it is mainly produced as a lively young wine with slight perlage.

Gastronomy

This is a happy, lively wine ideal for afternoon get-togethers or picnics. It goes well with *salumi* [charcuterie], soups (tripe) and *Bagna Caoda*.

Recommended serving temperature: 8°C (46°F)

Viticulture Notes

This varietal grows well in loose light soil on sunny hillsides: it has always been cultivated in the Alba area where it is enjoyed as a table grape. It is cultivated in the Roero countryside around the towns of Corneliano, Vezza, Pocapaglia and Monticello d'Alba and is also grown along the spurs leading up from the Belbo River toward Mango in the Belbo valley. Above all it is grown in the municipalities of Cossano Belbo and Rocchetta Belbo where it is also known as "Furmentin" or "Fermentino". The Favorita vine has rather big bunches of fruit which are pyramid shaped and the grapes are golden-yellow, juicy and pleasant tasting.

There are about 110 hectares under cultivation and they are listed in File 8 under the denomination "Langhe".

Technical Notes

This wine was used in the past for blending. About halfway through the 1970's the vine growers started using more modern technology to bring this marvellous wine to the attention of the public. Their initiatives were successful and this wine is now appreciated both in Italy and abroad.

Favorita is straw-yellow in colour with lemon highlights, it has an intense delicate perfume of exotic fruit while young, becoming a hazelnut aroma when aged. It has a pleasant, pungent, elegant flavour.

Gastronomy

Suitable as an aperitif, it also pairs well with fish or sea food starters. Excellent with cheese.

Langhe Chardonnay DOC November 22, 1994
Piemonte Chardonnay DOC November 22, 1994

Recommended serving temperature: 8°C (46°F)

Viticulture Notes

This varietal takes its name from a small area in the heart of Burgundy and derives from the word “chardon”, meaning cardoon (a type of edible thistle).

In the past this grape was often confused with Pinot Bianco, but it is now clear that Chardonnay is completely different, distinguishable by ampelographic and morphologic characteristics of both the vine and wine. It has small, compact and nearly always winged bunches. The grapes are rather small, spherical or slightly oval, and straw-collared, tending toward gold with speckles when perfectly ripe.

The total area under cultivation is over 250 hectares yielding more than 22,000 quintals of fruit. Please consult File 8, denomination Langhe, and File 9 denomination Piemonte, for the production zones.

Technical Notes

This vine has become widely popular in recent years both for its high quality fruit and early ripening.

The fruit produces still and sparkling wines; for the denomination Langhe Chardonnay, 85% of chardonnay grapes are required, otherwise it is often used in blending and as a blending wine.

It is blended with Pinot Bianco, Nero or Grigio in varying quantities according to the desired finished product.

Gastronomy

The still wine is suitable for aperitifs, some starters, but most of all for fish or seafood dishes. The sparkling wine is also suitable for the above and for as well as for celebrations. However, it is not

recommended for desserts unless the demi-sec or dolce [sweet] version is served. It is much appreciated as a wine for to accompany the whole meal, especially if it has been fermented in the bottle following the traditional method.

Recommended serving temperature: 6-8°C (43-46°F)

Viticulture Notes

This variety gives us a markedly aromatic wine; its perfume is reminiscent of Moscato and roses. It is found sporadically in vineyards in the Alba area and it is often confused with other aromatic black grape vines such as Malvasia and Moscato. The grape bunches are rather small with medium sized grapes of a nice blue-black, violet colour.

The cultivation is limited to a few dozen hectares mostly in the Moscato Bianco area. Zones of production can be found in File 9, denomination Piemonte.

Technical Notes

Brachetto is made into naturally sweet sparkling or sparkling aromatic wine. It should be drunk while still young to best appreciate the grape aromas.

On the west side of the Tanaro River (i.e. Roero zone) the Brachetto grape is grown, but the wine made from it has been called Birbet since 1996 when Acqui received DOCG classification.

Gastronomy

Brachetto is above all a dessert wine, while Birbet, served at 14-16°C (57-60°F) is ideal with *salumi* [charcuterie].

Viticulture Notes

This variety certainly has its origins in the Asti area where it is widely diffused. It is also cultivated in the Alba area with fairly good results, resulting in wines not unlike those made in its zone of origin.

It requires light soil and good exposure to the sun; otherwise it ripens with difficulty. The bunches have an intense characteristic salmon-red colouring.

The area under cultivation is approximately 20 hectares and the production zone is detailed in File 9 under “Piemonte”.

Technical Notes

This wine has a dull raspberry colour and a delicate perfume of meadow flowers. Its taste is lively and it should be drunk while still young. It is not suitable for ageing.

Gastronomy

This wine is best paired with starters and soups.

Recommended serving temperature: 15-16°C (59-61°F)

Viticulture Notes

That this wine originated in Burgundy is the almost unanimous decision of ampelographers. Its cultivation there is both historical and widespread.

It is a hardy plant with regular, but not abundant production. The leaves are medium sized and the bunches are small, short and cylindrical, similar to a pine cone. The grapes are small, slightly elliptical with a thick skin and are dark violet in colour.

This vine has been cultivated in the Alba area since its introduction by Count Camillo Benso of Cavour in the mid 1800s. It is a noble yet demanding plant.

Pinot Grigio vineyards exist but they are quite rare. Details of the production zone can be found in File 9 under the denomination “Piemonte”. There are 8 hectares under cultivation, to which we can add a few other vineyards which are registered as “Langhe Rosso”.

Technical Notes

This grape has nearly always been used for blending with Chardonnay and Pinot Bianco for the production of sparkling wines. Only recently has it been employed by growers, either singly or with other grapes, to produce some big character red wines that require special vinification and suitable vineyards.

Gastronomy

Still wine: suitable for the entire meal.

Sparkling wine: aperitifs and for any festive occasion:
Recommended serving temperature: 41-43°F.

Recommended serving temperature: 15-16°C (59-61°F)

Viticulture Notes

This vine was more widespread in the past than it is today. It is mainly found in the hills on the east side of the Tanaro River. It was mainly used to produce natural sparkling wines. It is usually cultivated in small vineyards or together with other vines.

There are about 12 hectares of registered vineyards cultivating this grape and the production zones are recorded in File 9 under the denomination “Piemonte”.

Technical Notes

The wine made solely from these grapes is dry and intensely ruby-red in colour. It has a markedly pleasant perfume and should be drunk rather young.

Gastronomy

Suitable for the first part of a meal.

Recommended serving temperature: 8°C (46°F)

Viticulture Notes

This white varietal probably comes from Novese, in the province of Alessandria, and has been cultivated in Piemonte since the second half of the 1700s.

It is a hardy vine with generous yields which require sunny, well drained hillsides; the soil must be rich in limestone and not too compact.

The areas where it is best cultivated are Gavi and the surrounding districts, but it is also quite widespread in the Asti and Tortona territories and there are sporadic cultivations in the Alba area. There are about 16 hectares under cultivation of Cortese Bianco giving a yield of over 1,500 quintals of grapes. See File 9 for the zones of origin of the grapes of “Piemonte” denomination.

Technical Notes

It is the most traditional of the Piemonte white wines, but it never achieves recognition for its quality outside the above mentioned areas.

Gastronomy

This wine is ideal for aperitifs, some starters, fish and seafood dishes.

Recommended serving temperature: 15-16°C (59-61°F)

Viticulture Notes

There are two types of varieties known as Pelaverga in the province of Cuneo. One can be found in the Saluzzo area together with Quagliano and other local varieties and the second type, from Verduno, grows in a restricted area around Alba. It owes its cultivation to the monk who introduced it to this area, the Blessed Valfrè.

This grape has large, elongated bunches with reddish-violet grapes when ripe. The plant thrives in good soil on sunny hills.

The limited zone of production includes the whole municipality of Verduno and part of those of La Morra and Roddi.

The registered vineyards cover about 8 hectares giving an annual production of 60,000 bottles.

Technical Notes

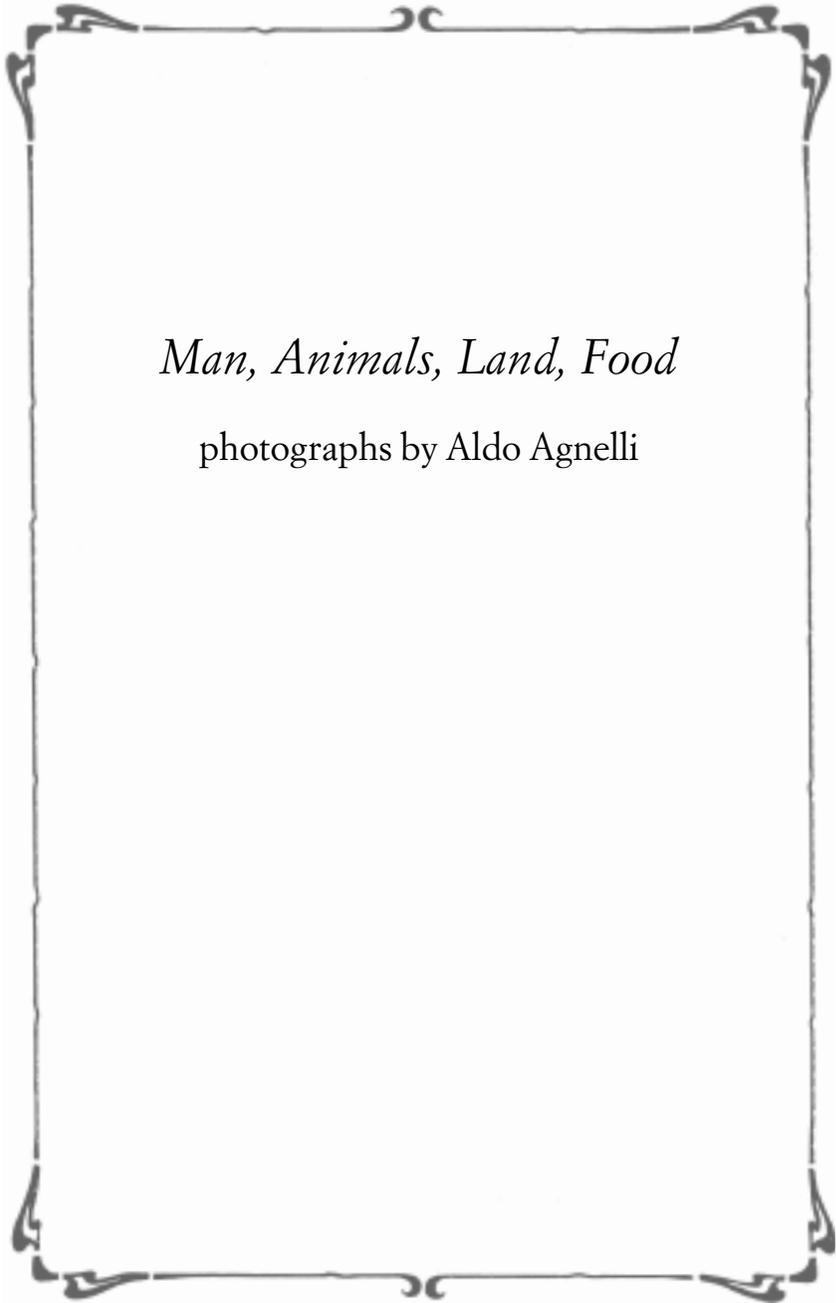
The wine must contain at least 85% Pelaverga Piccolo grapes; the remaining 15% percent can be made up of other red grape varieties as long as they are registered in their respective production zones.

The wine is a dull ruby-red colour with delicate highlights of violet or dark raspberry. It has a pleasant perfume with definite spicy characteristics.

It has a well balanced, slightly velvety taste which is neither too austere nor heavy. It should be drunk fairly young and is not suitable for ageing.

Gastronomy

It can accompany the entire meal thanks to its pleasant and cheerful nature. An easy wine to understand, yet never banal.

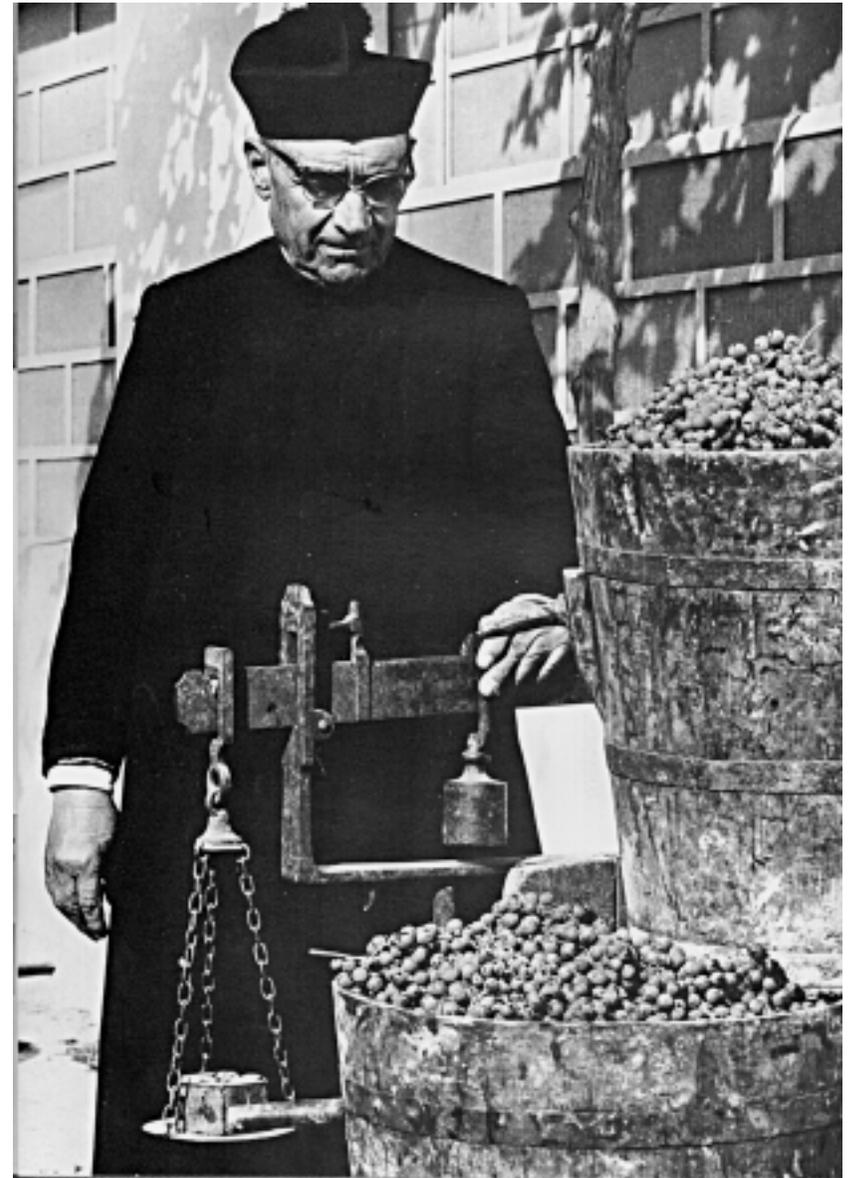
A decorative rectangular border with ornate, symmetrical flourishes at each corner and midpoints of the top and bottom edges.

Man, Animals, Land, Food

photographs by Aldo Agnelli

A native of Alba; Aldo Agnelli has had decades of experience photographing the landscape and people of the Langhe. The images here are from the late 1950's through the 1960's and give us a glimpse of a way of life that has all but disappeared today.







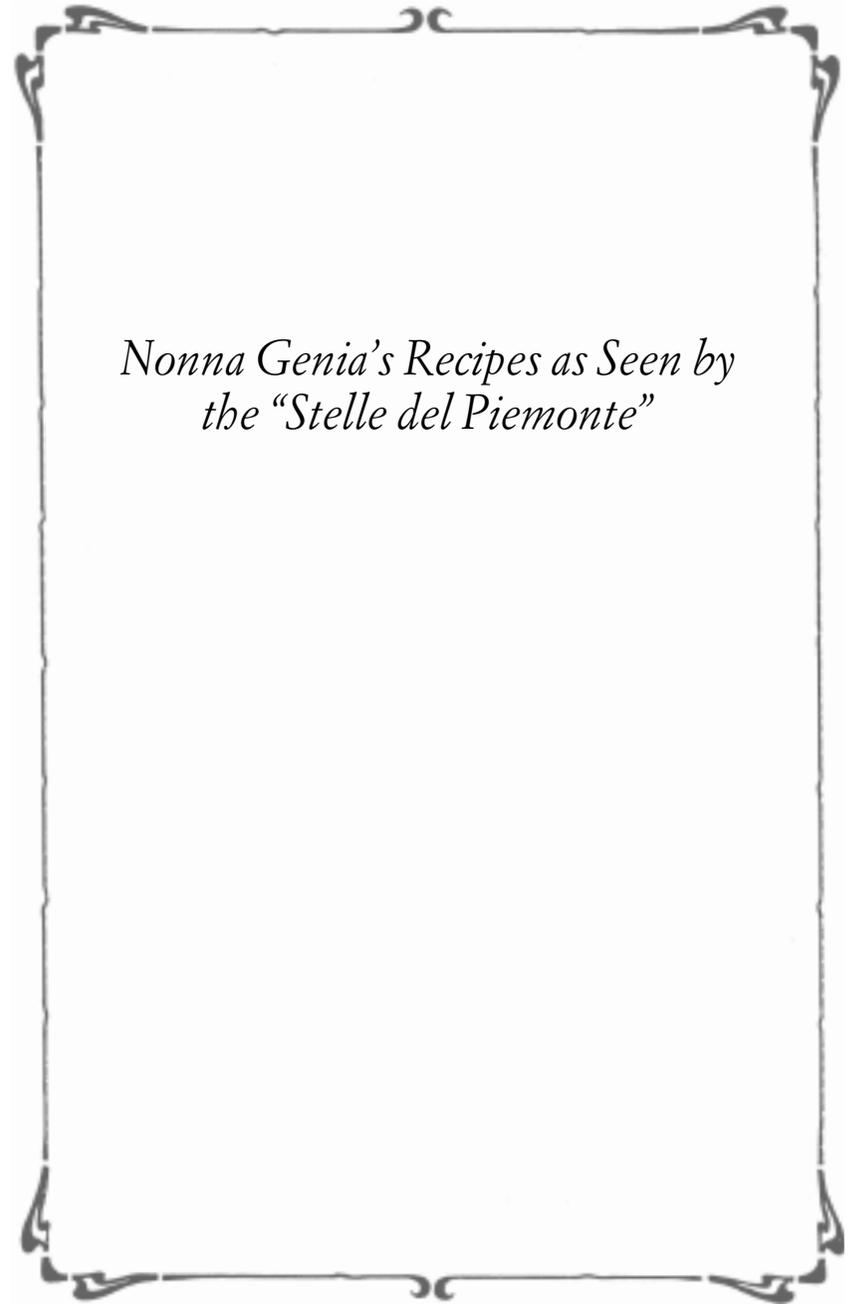












Contents

Preface by Franco Bergamino	225
<i>Vitella Piemontese al coltello con sedano croccante e cialde di Parmigiano Reggiano</i> - Veal Tartare with Crisp Celery and Parmigiano-Reggiano Wafers by Stefano Gallo	230
<i>Filetto di Vitello crudo alla pastora</i> - Veal Carpaccio-Cheese Spirals with Vinaigrette by Mariuccia Roggero Ferrero	232
<i>Carne al cubo con salsa alla verbena</i> - Veal Cubes with Verbena Sauce by Antonino Cannavacciuolo	234
<i>Filetto crudo di vitella con pesca al basilico, pepe e china</i> Raw Veal Fillet with Peach-Basil Sauce by Fabio Barbaglini	236
<i>Vitello tonnato Finger Food</i> - Veal Roll-ups with Tuna Sauce by Davide Scabin	238
<i>Fagottini di erbe e basilico con salsa di piselli e burro al limone</i> Herb-Ricotta Stuffed <i>Fagottini</i> with Sweet Pea Sauce and Lemon Butter by Sergio Vineis	240
<i>Maltagliati di pasta all'uovo con ragù al civet di lepre</i> Fresh Pasta with Hare Ragù by Massimo Camia	242
<i>Ravioli di ceci, costine di maiale e caramello piccante</i> Chickpea Ravioli with Pork Rib Sauce and Spicy Syrup by Davide Palluda	244
<i>Frittata di cipolle e patate al miele di castagno</i> Onion and Potato Frittata with Chestnut Honey by Marc Lanteri	246

The following recipes are proposed according to the sequence of a traditional Piedmontese menu: antipasti, first courses, second courses, dessert. The editor thanks all the “Stelle del Piemonte” chefs: Ugo Alciati, Andrea Ribaldone and Riccardo Aiachini, Fabio Barbaglini, Piercarlo Bussetti, Massimo Camia, Antonino Cannavacciuolo, Fausto Carrara, Giuseppina Bagliardi and Piero Fassi, Mariuccia Ferrero, Walter Ferretto, Stefano Gallo, Marta Grassi, Marc Lanteri, Mariangela Marone, Alessandra Strocchio and Massimiliano Musso, Davide Palluda, Alfredo Russo, Marco Sacco, Davide Scabin, Mariangela Susigan, Sergio Vineis.

<i>Cipolle ripiene</i> - Stuffed Baked Onions by Walter Ferretto	248
<i>Semolino Dolce</i> - Deep-fried Sweet Semolina Squares by Fausto Carrara	250
<i>La Finanziere Reale</i> - La Finanziere Reale by Mariangela Susigan	252
<i>Coniglio ai Peperoni</i> - Rabbit in Roasted Pepper Sauce by Piercarlo Bussetti	254
<i>Coniglio all'ortolana</i> - Rabbit with Garden Vegetables by Massimiliano Musso	256
<i>Trippa con uovo bazzotto</i> - Tripe with Poached Eggs by Pina Fassi	258
<i>Lingua di Vitello in Salsa Verde</i> - Veal Tongue in Green Sauce by Alfredo Russo	260
<i>Lingua alla moda della "Fermata"</i> - Veal Tongue "La Fermata" by Andrea Ribaldone	262
<i>Flan di Bettelmatt con mirtilli e pere</i> - Bettelmatt Flan with Blueberries and Pears by Marco Sacco	264
<i>Panna Cotta</i> - Panna Cotta by Marta Grassi	266
<i>Mousse di castagne</i> - Chestnut Mousse by Ugo Alciati	268
<i>Torta di farina di riso Venere e mele</i> Apple and Venere Rice Cake by Mariangela Marone	270

Nonna Genia Yesterday, Stelle del Piemonte Today: The Gastronomic Tradition of the Langhe as the Heart of Today's Piedmontese Cuisine

"*Stelle del Piemonte*" is a group of great chefs which was founded in 2005 with the goal of showing, through their culinary mastery, the identity, culture, art history and traditions of a great region of Italy: Piedmont.

The "*Stelle del Piemonte*" project is overseen by the *Assessorato Regionale al Turismo* [Regional Tourism Ministry], which has set its sights on burnishing Piedmont's already strong presence within the world's great cuisines through the concept of food as an element in dialogue and universal communication, using taste as a vehicle for emotions and sensations.

The idea of combining gastronomy and tourism came from observing the French and Spanish: anyone who has heard things about Alain Ducasse or Ferran Adrià immediately thinks of gastronomic masters from their own country, of the great chefs and their establishments which have become tourism hot spots for visiting gourmands from all over the world. The goal of our project is to accomplish the same thing, without being limited to a single "maestro". Therefore we decided to promote a team of successful chefs who are expert interpreters of Piedmontese cuisine, and who can represent the subtle differences one finds in various parts of the region. Within the Piedmontese culinary constellation there are many stars which shine brightly, and an entire team can better represent all the various realities that are found in our region. In sum, a sort of critical mass in which the participants act as spokespeople and ambassadors for the historical, cultural, artistic,

scenic and oenogastronomic heritage which we in the Piedmont region are so fortunate to have.

The “*Stelle del Piemonte*” project has, in fact, quickly become a point of pride for the region’s gastronomic tourism sector. It is a resource which attracts the public’s attention as well as interest from the national and international media. One need only think of the recent experiences such as the 2006 Winter Olympic Games in Torino and the “Piemonte Food Festival” at the United Nations in New York in May 2007, where the audience boasted representatives from 192 countries. At both of these events the “*Stelle del Piemonte*” presented the great classics of Piedmontese cuisine together with the warmth and hospitality that one finds when visiting this corner of Italy.

In addition, the project “*Stelle del Piemonte*” has achieved an important goal in creating a team of friends, within which each chef collaborates with the others. They exchange experiences and know-how, they discuss new techniques and they consult each other on dishes and menus.

Yes, with this project we have lent credence to the concept that there is strength in numbers, and the results are already apparent: in the past two years, new chefs who have proven themselves qualitatively and professionally have been invited to join the project.

The relationship between “*Stelle del Piemonte*” and “*Nonna Genia*” came about spontaneously; it is a logical step for a group of talented chefs who are the guardians and interpreters of our region’s cuisine and who have built and fortified their own professional repertoire frequently consulting this well-known cookbook.

The menus in their restaurants propose memorable dishes, the classic Piedmontese specialties that are often reinterpreted according to the philosophy that each chef follows in his or her kitchen. So we have Piercarlo Bussetti from *Locanda Mongreno* in Torino who gives us a new version of *Coniglio ai Peperoni*; Sergio

Vineis of *Il Patio* in Pollone invites us to try a filled pasta with late spring in mind; Walter Ferretto of *Il Cascinale Nuovo* in Asti offers a version of *Cipolle ripiene* which incorporates the sweet-savoury characteristics found in *Fritto misto*. Marco Sacco of *Piccolo Lago* in Verbania playfully presents us with a savoury rendition of *Panna cotta*, where the main ingredient is Bettelmatt cheese, reminiscent of the fontina used in making fonduta. Antonino Cannavacciuolo of *Villa Crespi* in Orta San Giulio, Mariuccia Roggero Ferrero of *San Marco* in Canelli, Stefano Gallo of the *La Barrique* in Torino and Fabio Barbaglini of *La Gallina* in Gavi put a contemporary spin on the traditional *Carne cruda all’albese*. Davide Palluda of *Enoteca* in Canale d’Alba transforms the classic *Zuppa di costine di maiale* into *Ravioli di ceci con costine e caramello piccante...* And there are many more...

Piedmont not only represents tradition, it is a daily dialogue with the future. This is especially true in the kitchen, where our chefs are able to communicate the identity of a land which is proud of its past, and from which comes creative inspiration along with the indefatigable desire to experiment and make strides towards tomorrow.

I would like to thank Giuliana Manica, the Piedmont Region’s Tourism Councillor, for the support her office has given to “*Stelle del Piemonte*”. Under her auspices this initiative has flourished and become a strong point for our wine and gastronomy industry as well for the region in general.

Special thanks should be given to all the “*Stelle del Piemonte*” members: Andrea Ribaldone and Riccardo Aiachini, Ugo Alciati, Fabio Barbaglini, Piercarlo Bussetti, Massimo Camia, Antonino Cannavacciuolo, Fausto Carrara, Giuseppina Bagliardi and Piero Fassi, Mariuccia Ferrero, Walter Ferretto, Stefano Gallo, Marta Grassi, Marc Lanteri, Mariangela Marone, Alessandra Strocchio and Massimiliano Musso, Davide Palluda, Alfredo Russo, Marco Sacco, Davide Scabin, Mariangela Susigan, Sergio Vineis, Giampiero Vivalda, Angelo Angiulli. Without them, their belief in

the project, and their hard work and contributions, none of this would have been possible.

Final acknowledgements go to Roberta Corradin, editor of this volume who has championed our project from the start, following it closely and with affection. We thank the publisher, Araba Fenice Edizioni, who recognized the value in republishing Nonna Genia after years of it being out of print. Through their efforts the traditions of Piedmontese cuisine have become more visible, including a German edition as well as the present one in English. Last though certainly not least, we thank Beppe Lodi, co-author of the original edition with Luciano De Giacomi, and Antonio De Giacomi, son of the late Luciano, who enthusiastically embraced the idea of adding this new section with the recipes of the “*Stelle del Piemonte*” and in so doing have underscored the continuity between Eugenia De Marchi (Nonna Genia), herself an important chef, and the current team of Piedmontese chefs who carry forward her tradition.

Franco Bergamino
Project Coordinator, “*Stelle del Piemonte*”
Torino
September, 2007

The Recipes of the “Stelle del Piemonte”

*Vitella Piemontese al coltello con sedano croccante
e cialde di Parmigiano Reggiano*

**Veal Tartare with Crisp Celery
and Parmigiano-Reggiano Wafers**

Serves 4

500g (generous 1 lb) extra lean veal rump from an 11-12 month old Piedmontese breed calf
4 stalks celery
Extra virgin olive oil
Salt, pepper
2 cloves garlic, peeled and halved lengthwise
Trapani salt crystals (Maldon salt can substitute Trapani salt is unavailable)

For the cheese wafers:

a 300g (10¹/₂ oz) piece of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

Prepare the wafers:

With a very sharp large knife cut 12 large but extremely thin slices from the Parmigiano-Reggiano, approximately 8-10cm (3-4 inches) in diameter, and 1 mm (paper thin) thick. Arrange the slices on a cookie sheet lined with baking paper with 4-5cm (about 2 inches) distance between them. Bake at 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4 for about 3 minutes. Let cool and then place in a single layer on paper towel.

Dice 2 stalks of celery and leave to soak in a bowl of ice water. Cut the remaining 2 stalks into julienne slices and place them in another bowl of ice water.

Finely slice the veal. Rub the inside of a salad bowl with the garlic and discard. Put the meat in the bowl and add olive oil, salt and

pepper to taste. Serve the meat in single portions, as follows. Place a slice of the meat in the centre of a plate and pressed it flat so it forms an even, almost round circle. Sprinkle cubes of celery and some Trapani salt crystals and drizzle with olive oil. Garnish each plate with a Parmigiano Reggiano wafer and the julienne celery.

Chef Stefano Gallo says, “This plate has the same ingredients as the traditional *Carne all’Albese* served in the trattorie of the Langhe. Without altering the ingredients I took a more contemporary perspective in their preparation.”

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Filetto di Vitello crudo alla pastora

Veal Carpaccio-Cheese Spirals with Vinaigrette

Serves 4

300g (generous 1/2 lb) extra lean veal fillet, thinly sliced
200g (approximately 7 oz) Robiola di Langa cheese, medium-aged
150ml (scant 3/4 cup) extra-virgin olive oil
30ml (2 tablespoons) lemon juice
50g (1/2 cup) very finely ground hazelnuts
baby salad greens, in season
150g (2 1/4 cup) Caesar's mushrooms
50g (1/3 cup) celery hearts
50g (3 oz) aged Raschera cheese
50g (scant 1/2 cup) walnuts, in pieces
a pinch dried oregano
1 tomato, peeled and cut in cubes
pearl onions in balsamic vinegar
baby zucchini, packed in oil

Lightly pound the slices of meat and sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste.

Apart, mash the Robiola with a fork. Add salt and pepper to taste and enough olive oil to form a smooth paste. Spread the mixture onto each slice of meat and roll them up. Cut the rolls into slices approximately 2cm (3/4 inch) and arrange them on a bed of fresh baby salad greens, either on individual plates or on a serving platter.

Dress with a sauce prepared by whisking together the lemon juice, olive oil, salt, pepper and very finely ground hazelnuts. Mix well until creamy.

Finely slice the mushrooms and celery heart and combine them with the broken walnuts and shavings of Raschera. Add salt, pepper, oregano. Toss with olive oil and arrange on the plates with the veal-cheese slices. Garnish with the cubed tomato, sweet and sour onions (1 per serving) and julienne slices of baby zucchini.

Chef Mariuccia Roggero Ferrero says, “The antipasto “*Insalata di carne cruda*” is quite common in Piedmont. This is a richer version which I propose for the holidays or in any case to break from the standard fare on special occasions.”

Translator's note: The sauce can be emulsified quickly in a small food processor.

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Carne al cubo con salsa alla verbena

Veal Cubes with Verbena Sauce

Serves 4

Ingredients for the veal cubes:

400g (14 oz) Piedmontese breed veal filet
extra-virgin olive oil
juice of 1 organic lemon

Ingredients for the onion marinade:

1 red Tropea onion
salt
extra-virgin olive oil
15ml (1 tablespoon) organic lemon juice

Ingredients for the verbena sauce:

500ml (2 cups) fresh milk
500ml (2 cups) fresh cream
the peel of half an organic lemon, in pieces
20g (1/2 cup) fresh lemon verbena leaves
salt

Ingredients for the garnish:

40 young rocket (arugula)
4 watercress sprigs
4 chervil leaves
4 valerian leaves
4 edible flower petals, such as nasturtium or violet

Prepare the onion marinade: peel the onion and slice it finely. Sprinkle with abundant salt and set it aside in a colander for at least

8 hours. Rinse well and pat dry in paper towel, then dress them with olive oil, lemon juice and salt and pepper.

Prepare the verbena sauce: In a pan pour the milk and cream; add the lemon peel and the fresh verbena. Bring to a boil and cook down until it is reduced to only one sixth the original volume. Drain the mixture through a fine cone-shaped sieve, and let cool to room temperature.

Slice the meat into slices approximately 1.5cm (3/4 inch) thick. Slice again crosswise to obtain cubes. Gently toss the cubes of meat with the olive oil, lemon and salt to taste.

Using a spoon, randomly drizzle the verbena sauce on each plate. On top of the sauce place 3 cubes of veal leaving plenty of space between them. Garnish with the onions, arugula, valerian leaves and edible flower petals.

Chef Antonino Cannavacciuolo says, “The meat from the Piedmontese calf has an excellent texture, perfect for dishes using raw meat. This dish can be further enlivened at the holidays with a spoonful of Osetra caviar.”

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*Filetto crudo di vitella con pesca al basilico,
pepe e china*

Raw Veal Fillet with Peach-Basil Sauce

Serves 4

300g (10 1/2 oz) extra lean veal fillet
2 yellow organic peaches
1 lemon
1 small bunch fresh basil
Extra-virgin olive oil
Fleur-de-sel salt
good quality pepper
25g (2 tablespoons) sugar
25g (generous 1 1/2 tablespoons) balsamic vinegar
75g (5 tablespoons) china liqueur

Peel the peaches with a sharp knife and set them aside in a baking dish. In a saucepan put the skins with enough water to cover and boil for a few minutes. Strain the cooking water over the peaches, add a few basil leaves, a small amount of olive oil, the peach skins and the juice of half the lemon. Bake in a ventilated oven at 160°C/325°F/gas mark 3 for approximately 20 minutes.

Make a syrup with the sugar and vinegar. Add the china liqueur and cook on moderate heat for a few minutes. When cooled, pass the mixture through a sieve and whisk it with a bit of olive oil until a light emulsion has been obtained.

Cut the meat to form 4 thick medallions and season them with a bit of olive oil and the pepper.

Cut the peaches into cubes and drizzle with olive oil, a few drops of lemon juice and sliced basil leaves. Divide the sauce among the

individual plates, place the meat on top and garnish on the side with the peach salad. Sprinkle with salt crystals and serve.

Chef Fabio Barbaglini says, “The Piedmontese breed of calf is the best, and it is incredibly well-suited for dishes requiring raw meat. Here I have recreated the sauce from another classic Piedmontese dish, *carpione*, with the bitterness of the china liqueur which nicely offsets the sweetness of the peaches and the flavor of the fresh basil.”

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Vitello tonnato Finger Food Veal Roll-ups with Tuna Sauce

Serves 12-15

1,200g (2½ lbs) veal eye of round

Ingredients for the gravy:

50ml (¼ cup) white wine

170g (6 oz) tuna in oil, drained weight

12g (2¾ teaspoons) anchovies in oil

16g (3½ teaspoons) capers in salt

70ml (⅓ cup) fresh cream

100ml (scant ½ cup) milk

Ingredients for the sauce:

3 hardboiled egg yolks

70ml (⅓ cup) oil from the canned tuna

70ml (⅓ cup) sunflower oil

5ml (1 teaspoon) white vinegar

Use the best quality canned tuna available.

Prepare the meat:

In a deep heavy oven-proof skillet brown the veal on all sides in 40-50ml (3-4 tablespoons) olive oil for approximately 5 minutes. Add the white wine and allow to cook down. Add the other ingredients for the gravy, pour in the cream and milk and roast in a 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4 oven for 20 minutes. Remove from oven, cover with a lid and leave to cool.

Transfer the pan drippings to bowl and purée with a hand held immersion blender, incorporating the hardboiled egg yolks, the oil

from the tuna and the sunflower oil. Whisk the sauce, adding the vinegar and a few ice cubes.

Thinly slice the meat. Stuff each slice with 6-7g (½ teaspoon) of the sauce, folding the edges up carefully so the meat slice becomes a small closed packet to be eaten with one's fingers.

Chef Davide Scabin says, “This recipe of mine is an innovation in which the classic Piedmontese antipasto *Vitello tonnato* becomes finger-food that can be served even at cocktail parties. I first made this in 1997 and I am pleased to see that many of my colleagues have adopted the idea. Not only is it aesthetically original (the slices of veal which are usually served on a plate with the sauce spooned over become little ‘ravioli’), but it is functionally innovative as well.”

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*Fagottini di erbette e basilico
con salsa di piselli e burro al limone*

Herb-Ricotta Stuffed *Fagottini*
with Sweet Pea Sauce and Lemon Butter

Serves 10

Ingredients for the filling:

1 kg (generous 2 lbs) greens such as baby spinach, beet greens or Swiss chard
50g (1¼ cup) fresh basil leaves
200g (1 cup) ricotta
100g (½ cup) grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
2 egg yolks

Ingredients for the pasta:

500g (5 cups) flour
100g (2½ cups) parsley, finely chopped
15 egg yolks

Ingredients for the sauce:

70g (⅓ cup) butter
1 lemon
150g (1 cup) peas
100g (scant ½ cup) extra-virgin olive oil
flakes of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, to taste

Prepare the pasta: Combine the flour and the egg yolks and parsley, set aside where it can keep cool.

Prepare the filling: Blanch the greens and cool them. Finely chop them with a knife and briefly cook them in a skillet with some olive oil and a clove of garlic. Discard the garlic and mix in the coarsely

chopped basil, the Parmigiano Reggiano, the ricotta and egg yolks. If at this point the mixture is too wet, a piece of bread (crust removed) can be chopped up and added.

Roll out a thin sheet of pasta and cut into small squares. Brush with beaten egg. Place a small amount of filling the centre of each square and then close each by joining the 4 sides all together and gently squeezing closed to make a little bundle.

Prepare the sauce: Blanch the peas for 2 minutes in abundant salted water. Drain, setting aside some of the water. In a skillet and toss the peas with a bit of olive oil for about 30 seconds. Purée them with a bit of their cooking water to obtain a smooth creamy sauce. In a small pan heat the butter and add a small piece of lemon peel. Set aside but keep warm.

Cook the *fagottini* in abundant salted water. Place a bit of the sauce in the bottom of individual plates. Remove the *fagottini* from the water and arrange them on top of the sauce. Spoon the butter over them, sprinkle with a few flakes of Parmigiano Reggiano and serve.

Chef Sergio Vineis says, “There is a tradition of filled pasta in Piedmontese cuisine which I used as a point of departure. I propose this fresh variation perfect for spring which, though simple to make, requires a certain level of skill. It is light and visually inviting, perfect for those beautiful days between spring and summer.”

Translator’s note: The Italian word *fagottino* means “bundle”. The Parmigiano Reggiano flakes can be made by drawing a potato peeler across a large piece of the cheese.

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*Maltagliati di pasta all'uovo
con ragù al civet di lepre*

Fresh Pasta with Hare Ragù

Serves 4

300g (10¹/₂ oz) fresh egg pasta
1 hare thigh, boned
1 bottle of red wine for the marinade
1 carrot
1 stalk of celery
1 medium onion
spices to taste
1 garlic clove
A sprig of rosemary
300ml (1¹/₄ cups) red wine, possibly half Barbera and half Barolo

Marinate the hare overnight in a bottle of red wine with a piece of onion, a stalk of celery, a piece of carrot and a pinch of fresh spices to taste. Remove the hare from the marinade. Coarsely chop the remaining carrot and onion and brown them in a large casserole, adding the minced garlic and the bay leaf. Add the hare, brown it on all sides and then reduce heat and cook for 30 minutes, covered.

Add the 300ml (1¹/₄ cups) red wine and cook until the wine is evaporated and the meat is tender. If it should appear dry, add a bit of stock. When done, remove the hare from the casserole and shred it by hand. Set aside and keep warm, taking care it does not dry out. Sieve the sauce.

Cook the pasta in abundant salted water. Drain when al dente and toss it gently with the sauce and a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil. Arrange on individual plates and garnish with the shredded hare.

Serve hot. The wine best suited for this dish would be an aged Barolo or Barbera.

Chef Massimo Camia says, “I like to interpret local cuisine incorporating some differences yet respecting tradition. This variation is to show that hare does not always need to be a second course; when shredded, it makes an excellent condiment for fresh pasta.”

Translator’s note: Occasionally one comes across “*pasta maltagliati*” [“badly cut”]. The reference is literal, for the rolled out sheet of pasta is randomly cut by hand with the pasta cutter. The result is a dish that has an appealing, homemade appearance.

Massimo Camia

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*Ravioli di ceci, costine di maiale
e caramello piccante*

Chickpea Ravioli with Pork Rib Sauce
and Spicy Syrup

Serves 4

200g (1 cup) dried chickpeas
8 pork ribs
100g (generous 1/2 cup) finely diced mixed vegetables (carrot, celery, onion)
150ml (2/3 cup) white wine
approximately 400 ml (1 3/4 cups) chicken or beef stock
2.5g (1 tablespoon) fresh parsley, chopped
60g (4 tablespoons) fresh mascarpone cheese
half a leek
15ml (1 tablespoon) honey
100g (1/2 cup) sugar
15ml (1 tablespoon) red wine vinegar
salt and black pepper
a pinch of ground cayenne pepper, or to taste
fresh pasta dough to make ravioli (see traditional recipe, page 60)

Soak the chickpeas in cold water for at least 8 hours, drain, and boil them in salted water. When they are cooked very soft pass them through a fine sieve twice. Combine the chickpeas with the mascarpone and add salt and pepper to taste. Chill the mixture in the refrigerator.

Trim the fat off the pork ribs brown them in a small amount of extra-virgin olive oil. Add salt and pepper to taste and the wine. When it has cooked down add the vegetables and leave to cook over low heat another 5 minutes, until they are golden. Add enough

hot stock to cover the pork ribs, cover and cook gently for at least 1 hour, adding more stock if needed. When the ribs are cooked, remove the meat from the bones and return the meat to the pan with the vegetables and sprinkle with the parsley.

In another pan combine the sugar and honey over low heat and when it begins to darken add the vinegar and 150ml (2/3 cup) cold water. Stir well, add the cayenne, and continue cooking until a syrup is obtained.

Roll the pasta into two sheets and prepare the ravioli, stuffing them with the chickpea-mascarpone mixture (see procedure, page 60). Cook in abundant salted water for a few minutes and drain. On each plate drizzle the spicy syrup, arrange the ravioli on top and spoon the pork rib sauce over them.

Chef Davide Palluda says, “The traditional recipe with pork ribs and chickpeas is actually a soup. However, transforming it into a ravioli dish makes it more elegant; the pasta is light and delicious. I adore the traditional soup, which is usually served as a single-course meal. But I also like my variation of it, which can be served as single part of a many-course meal.”

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Frittata di cipolle e patate al miele di castagno

Onion and Potato Frittata
with Chestnut Honey

Serves 6

9 eggs
2 large onions, thinly sliced
2 medium potatoes
50g (1/4 cup) grated Parmigiano Reggiano cheese
2 sprigs fresh thyme
extra-virgin olive oil
butter
chestnut honey

Sauté the onions in 50-60ml (4-5 tablespoons) olive oil. Peel the potatoes, cut into small cubes and parboil them. Add the potatoes to the onions and cook until lightly browned, stirring often.

In a bowl mix 5 whole eggs with 4 egg yolks, the thyme leaves, Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese and the onions and potatoes. Add salt and pepper to taste. Whip into soft peaks the remaining egg whites and very gently fold them into the egg mixture.

Cook the frittata in a heavy skillet with 20-30g (1-2 tablespoons) melted butter, carefully turning once while cooking.

Cut into wedges and serve drizzled with chestnut honey.

Chef Marc Lanteri says, “When I was growing up this frittata was always enjoyed in the autumn, made with ingredients from my father’s garden. Living in a town in the mountains the vegetables were not ready to pick until fairly late in the season. The beaten egg whites not only give a fluffy texture to the frittata but also make it appear bigger. Serving it with a touch of chestnut honey imparts

sweetness but also makes the dish more intense. It is excellent served with a salad.”

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Cipolle ripiene
Stuffed Baked Onions

Serves 4

Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4

4 yellow onions
1 kg (2¼ lb) coarse salt
100g (3½ oz) pork sausage
50g (½ cup) crushed amaretto cookies
50g (¼ cup) grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
2 egg yolks
20g (7 oz) butter
1 bay leaf
salt, pepper, nutmeg

Place the onions in an ovenproof casserole, cover them with the salt and bake them for 1½ hours. When done, rub the salt and outer skin off the onions with a clean kitchen towel. Make a circular incision around the bottom (root) and gently remove the inside of the onion, setting aside the external shell. Over low flame stew the onion hearts in the butter with the bay leaf until soft (partially cover the pan with the lid to prevent drying out) When the onions hearts are softened discard the bay leaf. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese and the egg yolks. Add salt, pepper and nutmeg to taste.

Remove the sausage from its casing and brown it in a non-stick pan without adding any other oil. Allow to cool 5 minutes and then chop into coarse pieces. Combine the cooked onions with the sausage and add the crushed amaretto cookies. Stuff the onion

“shells” with this mixture and bake briefly (15 minutes) at 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4.

Chef Walter Ferretto says, “The combination of sweet and salty flavours is typical of the Piedmontese Fritto Misto. I enjoy recreating that juxtaposition (the sweet amaretti with the salty sausage) in another classic dish of the region, *Stuffed Onions*.”

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Semolino Dolce
Deep-fried Sweet Semolina Squares

1 litre (1 quart) milk
250g (1½ cups) semolina
5 eggs
200g (1 cup) sugar
50g (¼ cup) butter
lemon peel
flour
breadcrumbs
extra-virgin olive-oil for frying

Heat the milk with the sugar and lemon peel. When it comes to a boil remove the lemon peel and slowly pour in the semolina. Return to low heat, stirring constantly, for a few minutes. Remove from heat and add each egg one at a time, mixing very well before adding the next. Return to very low heat and cook 2 more minutes. Pour the mixture onto a marble worktop or into a very large, shallow plate and spread it out with a spatula so it is only 2cm (¾ inch) thick. Let cool completely and cut into diamonds. Dust each piece with flour and then dip in beaten egg on coat with breadcrumbs. Fry in abundant very hot oil until golden and drain on paper towel. Dust with confectioner's sugar and serve.

Chef Fausto Carrara says, “This is a dish which is extremely versatile. It is one of the ingredients in the classic Piedmontese *Fritto Misto*, but it is also a great accompaniment to meat dishes such as *Brasato al barolo*, Hare in Wine Sauce, and Veal Shanks in Chocolate. As a snack these tasty squares can be served with apple fritters. A bit of trivia: it seems this dish was born out of an error when making polenta. First, the semolina was mistakenly

substituted for polenta flour, to which sugar and lemon peel were then added. It then became common practice to fry it, just as is often done with polenta.”

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La Finanziera Reale

La Finanziera Reale

Serves 4

200g (7 oz) veal sweetbreads
200g (7 oz) veal brains
100g (3½ oz) veal spinal cord
200g (7 oz) veal eye of round
100g (3½ oz) cockscomb
100g (½ cup) porcini mushrooms in vinegar
100ml (scant ½ cup) white wine vinegar
1 bay leaf, plus more for the garnish
150ml (⅔ cup) dry Marsala
120ml (½ cup) chicken stock
50g (¼ cup) butter

Soak the sweetbreads in equal parts water and milk, until the blood has been completely rinsed out and they are light-coloured, about 4-5 hours). Remove the connective tissue and cut into walnut-sized sections. Cook them for 10 minutes in 3 litres (3 quarts) water with 50ml (¼ cup) white wine vinegar. Drain them and set apart.

Clean the cock's crest and blanch in another 3 litres (3 quarts) water with 50ml (¼ cup) white wine vinegar and the bay leaf, then remove them with a skimmer. Cut the spinal cord into segments 3cm (1¼ inches) long and the veal brains into walnut-sized pieces and blanch them in the same water, draining them 2 minutes after the water has come to a boil. Cut the porcini into small pieces. Cut the eye of round into 1cm (½ inch) slices and then cut each of these in three and dust them with flour. All the above ingredients are kept in separate bowls until the last phase of cooking.

In a wide (30cm/12 inches) heavy skillet melt 50g (¼ cup) butter

and brown all the ingredients in the following order, one batch at a time: the scallops, sweetbreads, brains, spinal cord, cock's crest and lastly the porcini mushrooms. Add the Marsala and allow to evaporate, adding a bit of stock if necessary. At the very end add a knob of butter which has been dusted in flour and adjust the salt and pepper. Serve in a wide shallow bowl and decorate with fried bay leaves.

Chef Mariangela Susigan says, “What I had in mind with this dish was to highlight Finanziera as one of the more noble dishes found in Piedmontese cuisine but eliminating from the recipe the usual rabbit and chicken giblets along with the onions, carrots and peas (which were in fact used when one couldn't afford to make this dish exclusively with meat). As with the cuisine of the royal court, I have used only the choicest ingredients. In addition I have reduced the cooking times, executing the last step of combining all the ingredients just before serving so that the flavours of each morsel remain intact.”

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Coniglio ai Peperoni Rabbit in Roasted Pepper Sauce

Serves 4

Preheat oven to 220°C/450°F/gas mark 8

8 rabbit filets, approximately 450g (scant 1 lb)
250g (9 oz) red bell peppers
30ml (2 tablespoons) dry white wine
10ml (2 teaspoons) vinegar
50ml (1/4 cup) vegetable stock
50g (1/4 cup) butter
40ml (3 tablespoons) extra-virgin olive oil
5g (1 teaspoon) salt
freshly ground black pepper
250g (9 oz) potatoes
2g (scant 1/2 teaspoon) coarse salt

Prepare the bell pepper sauce:

Wash the peppers, place them in an oven proof dish and roast them in an oven preheated to 220°C/450°F/gas mark 8 for about 20 minutes. Remove from oven and transfer them to a bowl to cool. When cooled enough to handle, peel them and remove the seeds, reserving the liquid. Blend the peeled peppers in a food processor with their liquid; add two-thirds of the olive oil (25ml, or 2 tablespoons), the vinegar and a bit of vegetable stock and purée until smooth and not too dense. Adjust the salt and pepper and set aside.

Prepare the rabbit:

In a heavy non-stick skillet heat the remaining olive oil and butter and sear the rabbit filets. Season with salt and pepper and cook so

that they are uniformly browned yet not completely cooked inside. Set aside and keep them warm. Remove the excess fat from the skillet and then deglaze with the white wine, cooking it down until it is reduced by two-thirds. Add salt and pepper to taste and add a few flakes of very cold butter. Emulsify the mixture with a whisk and strain it through a sieve.

In a pot bring almost to a boil 1 litre (1 quart) of lightly salted water. Peel the potatoes cut them into chunks. Blanch them for approximately 10 minutes but do not overcook, so that they are still “al dente”. Drain and set apart.

Place a serving of the potatoes on the side of each plate, sprinkle with some coarse salt and drizzle with olive oil. Make a small pool of the pepper sauce in the centre of each plate and randomly arrange the rabbit filets on top. Drizzle with the hot pan juices which have been deglazed with the white wine and serve immediately.

Chef Piercarlo Bussetti says, “Traditionally the classic meat and vegetable dishes found in any farmhouse were submitted to lengthy cooking, resulting in a dish which although both tasty and tender somehow no longer resembled the original raw ingredients in colour (especially the vegetables), texture or even nutritive value. With this recipe I decided to cook the meat for less time, leaving it pink inside, and to roast the peppers whole and for a briefer period so as to exalt as much as possible their flavour and then to further transform them into a sauce. The result is meat which is very tender, accompanied by an intensely scented pepper cream that is a perfect match for the white meat of the rabbit.”

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Coniglio all'ortolana
Rabbit with Garden Vegetables

Serves 6

1 rabbit
1 bell pepper
3 cloves garlic
1 piece of celery (30g/1 oz)
1 piece of carrot (30g/1 oz)
1 sprig rosemary
1 pinch dried oregano
butter
50ml (1/4 cup) extra-virgin olive
120ml (1/2 cup) Marsala
60ml (1/4 cup) milk
6.5g (1 level tablespoon) flour
150ml (2/3 cup) tomato sauce
300g (1 1/2 cups) fresh porcini mushrooms, roughly cut
fresh parsley leaves

Cut the rabbit into pieces and dust with flour. Finely chop the bell pepper, garlic, celery, carrot, rosemary leaves and oregano. Put everything in a heavy casserole with olive oil and add salt and pepper to taste. Leave to cook on low heat, turning the rabbit so it browns but does not stick. After 20-25 minutes dissolve the flour in the Marsala and milk and add it to the rabbit. Continue cooking partially covered another 20-25 minutes. Add the tomato sauce. In a skillet melt the butter and cook the porcini mushrooms until tender (around 15 minutes). Pour them into the casserole with the rabbit, sprinkle with fresh parsley to taste and serve.

Chef Massimiliano Musso says, “There was a time that rabbit was commonly eaten. They were kept six to eight in a cage in barnyards. The use of Marsala and milk yields meat which is both tender and light; with the accompaniment of the porcini mushrooms it is a perfect dish for the end of the summer.”

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Trippa con uovo bazzotto
Tripe with Poached Eggs

Serves 10

2kg (4½ lbs) tripe, cut into strips
1 onion
1 leek
2 cloves garlic
2 stalks celery
A handful of dried *borlotti* beans
1 litre (1 quart) meat (beef or chicken) stock
extra-virgin olive oil
salt
pepper
parsley
thyme
1 poached egg per serving
1 *crostone* per serving (a slice of bread browned in melted butter)

Finely slice the onion, leek and garlic and sauté them in the olive oil. When they begin to brown a bit, add the tripe. Sauté for a few minutes until slightly golden and add the beans and then enough stock to cover the entire mixture. When the tripe is tender and the beans are cooked through, about 50 minutes, adjust the salt and pepper and add the finely minced herbs.

Place a *crostone* on each individual soup plate and pour the tripe over it. Garnish each portion with a poached egg.

Chef Pina Fassi says, “Tripe is a traditional dish in many regions. This version is lighter in its use of olive oil and no butter. It is practically a one course meal because of the beans, egg and toasted

bread. The tripe can be made ahead of time and reheated, but the *crostini* and eggs must be made just prior to serving.”

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Lingua di Vitello in Salsa Verde Veal Tongue in Green Sauce

Serves 8-10

For the tongue:

1 Piedmontese breed veal tongue, thoroughly rinsed
1 carrot
1 onion
2 stalks celery
1 small bunch of herbs (bay leaf, sage, thyme, rosemary), tied with cooking twine
2 cloves
salt, black peppercorns

Green Sauce:

a 6-7cm (1/2 inch) piece fresh horseradish
350g (12 oz) stale bread
750ml (3 cups) milk
60ml (4 tablespoons) balsamic vinegar
175g (4 1/2 cups) parsley leaves, cleaned
1/2 clove garlic
200g (1 cup) pearl onions in vinegar
170ml (3/4 cup) white wine vinegar
7g (2 teaspoons) anchovy filets
250ml (1 cup) extra-virgin olive oil
30g (2 tablespoons) salt

Prepare the tongue:

Bring large pot of water to boil with the carrot, celery, the onion stuck with the cloves, the herbs and a few peppercorns. Add the tongue. Adjust the salt and skim off the impurities as they

accumulate on the surface. Partially cover and cook for 2-3 hours, until the tongue is tender. Remove from the water and allow to cool a few minutes. While still hot peel away the skin and discard. Cut the tongue into slices about 3 cm (1 1/4 inches) thick and put them back in the cooking water to keep hot until ready to serve.

Prepare the sauce:

Peel the horseradish, cut it into pieces and put it in the food processor with a bit of cold water and a pinch of salt. Blend until a thick creamy consistency is obtained.

Soften the bread in the milk and squeeze out the excess milk. Put it in the food processor, add all the other ingredients for the sauce and blend until smooth and creamy but thick. Refrigerate until time to serve.

Drain the slices of tongue from the cooking water with a skimmer and arrange them on individual plates. Spoon a light layer of green sauce and garnish with random drops of the horseradish sauce.

Chef Alfredo Russo says, “The first thing I changed about this dish was the temperature in which the tongue is served. Traditionally it is chilled. I also changed the thickness of the slices; the original dish calls for very thin slices. In addition, the sauce here is lighter due to various ingredients not found in the original, and it results in a texture more similar to an emulsion than a true sauce. Try this version to appreciate how it contrasts with the classic.”

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Lingua alla moda della “Fermata”
Veal Tongue “La Fermata”

Serves 6

1 veal tongue
3 ripe *perini* or plum tomatoes
1 carrot, minced
1 stalk celery, minced
1 onion, sliced
30ml (2 tablespoons) honey
11g (1 tablespoon) sugar
45ml (3 tablespoons), plus 15ml (1 tablespoon) good quality vinegar
ground cayenne pepper to taste
4 eggs
1 bunch of parsley
1 loaf of white bread
6 cloves garlic

Boil the tongue in abundant salted water for approximately an hour and a half until it is tender (test by inserting a fork). Remove the skin and set aside, keeping it warm in some of the cooking water.

Brown the onion in the oil with the carrot, celery and tomatoes. Add the honey, sugar, 3 tablespoons of the vinegar and cayenne pepper.

Gently boil the sauce for approximately 20 minutes. Purée it with a hand mixer and push it through a conical sieve with the help of a spatula.

Hard boil the eggs and peel them. Remove the yolks and blend them with enough water to obtain a creamy consistency.

Toast 6 slices of bread in the oven at 190°C/375°F/gas mark 5; rub them with the garlic and a drop of vinegar.

Rinse and carefully dry several parsley leaves. Deep fry and drain on paper towel.

In the centre of each plate place a spoonful of the sauce and the *crostone*. Add a 4-5 cm cube (approximately 2x2 inches) of the veal tongue; garnish with drops of the egg yolk emulsion and fried parsley leaves. Add salt and pepper to taste and serve.

Chef Andrea Ribaldone says, “One of the great Piedmontese classics is *Lingua in salsa verde* [Veal Tongue in Green Sauce], which I propose hear in a new version, with a spicier sauce. The tongue is served in large cubes rather than in thin slices as in the traditional version; this improves the perception of its texture. The fried parsley leaves have a lovely crunchiness, but they can also be used raw if one prefers to skip this step.”

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Flan di Bettelmatt con mirtilli e pere

Bettelmatt Flan with Blueberries and Pears

Serves 4

Ingredients for the pear mostarda:

500g (generous 1 lb) Martine pears; peeled, cored and cut into wedges
210g (1 cup) sugar
70ml ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup) water
40ml (scant 3 tablespoons) white wine vinegar
5 drops mustard essence (may be substituted with 15g/1 tablespoon prepared coarse mustard)
100ml (scant $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) cream
50g ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) butter, room temperature

Ingredients for the blueberries:

300g (scant 2 cups) wild blueberries
100g ($\frac{3}{4}$ cup) sugar
100ml (scant $\frac{1}{2}$ cup) water
75ml ($\frac{1}{3}$ cup) apple cider vinegar
2.5g (1 teaspoon) salt
2.5g (1 teaspoon) ground cloves
2.5g (1 teaspoon) ground cinnamon
2.5g (1 teaspoon) ground cayenne
2.5g (1 teaspoon) ground black pepper

Ingredients for the flan:

200g (7 oz) Bettelmatt cheese, in tiny cubes
5 egg yolks
400g (generous 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups) cream

Prepare the pear mostarda: Make a syrup by heating the water with the sugar in a small heavy saucepan until it has dissolved completely. Add the pears and cook 5 minutes. Stir in the vinegar

and set aside to cool, then add the mustard essence and set aside for 48 hours. Pour into a sterile jar and serve after a month.

Prepare the blueberry sauce: cook the blueberries with the water for 20 minutes. Add the apple vinegar, sugar, salt, and spices, and cook another 20 minutes. Put in a jar and set aside to cool.

Prepare the flan: in a deep narrow bowl combine the egg yolks, cream and Bettelmatt. Blend with a hand held immersion blender. Grease 4-6 oven proof ramekins and bake at 160°C/325°F/gas mark 3 for minutes. (Place a small oven proof bowl of water at the bottom of the oven to avoid drying out.) Remove from oven and set aside, keeping them warm.

Prepare the pear sauce: In a saucepan cook down 100g ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) of the syrup from the pear mostarda. When is reduced by half, remove from heat and allow to cool 5 minutes. Add the cream and butter and stir until well combined and soft. Set aside and keep warm. Remove the flans from the ramekins and place each in the centre of a plate. Garnish with the pear sauce, slices of pear mostarda and drizzle with the spiced blueberries.

Chef Marco Sacco says, “Bettelmatt is one of the oldest Piedmontese cheeses. It is a raw cow’s milk cheese from Val d’Ossola, near the Swiss border, and is made only between July and September when the herds are out grazing in the mountain pastures. This dish is meant to be a variation on *Panna cotta*, and it also is reminiscent of *Fonduta* because of the use of cheese.”

Translator’s note: Mostarda is a fruit condiment served with savoury dishes, usually meats. For the flan, Fontina cheese may be substituted if Bettelmatt is unavailable.

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Panna Cotta

Panna Cotta

Serves 6

1 litre (1 quart) fresh cream
110g (1/2 cup) sugar
3 sheets gelatine
120g (4 oz) dark bittersweet chocolate, in tiny pieces

For the sauce:

100ml (scant 1/2 cup) fresh cream
50g (1/4 cup) dark bittersweet chocolate, in tiny pieces
3ml (1/2 teaspoon) rum or other liqueur as preferred

For the garnish:

200g (7 oz) coffee ice cream
100g (3 1/2 oz) sponge fingers
slightly sweetened strong coffee, room temperature

In a heavy pan on low heat cream and sugar, adding the chocolate pieces a bit at a time. Stir constantly until a smooth mixture is obtained and remove from heat.

Soak the gelatine in cold water, squeeze it out and add it to the cream mixture. Stir often until the mixture cools.

Prepare the sauce:

Over low heat combine the chocolate and cream, stirring until well combined and smooth. Add the rum and set aside.

In the bottom of a serving dish (approximately 20x12x10cm, or 8x5x4 inches) arrange the sponge fingers and brush them with the

coffee. Gently pour in the cream and sugar mixture, and chill in the refrigerator for at least 5-6 hours.

When the panna cotta has set, turn out of the dish and cut into little blocks measuring 3x3x10cm (1 1/2 x 1 1/2 x 4 inches); lay one slice on the side of each plate. Top each with a little scoop of coffee ice cream, then drizzle each serving with a spoonful of the sauce. Serve immediately.

Chef Marta Grassi says, “Classic *Panna cotta* is made with just the sweetened cream with the syrup on the bottom. Often the result is a heavy dessert which has a pasty texture. To solve this I have used chocolate, which has a cleansing effect on the palate and the theobromine content helps absorb in digesting the cream as well as the sponge fingers soaked in coffee. The aftertaste is contrasting and clean, different from the cloying effect the usual syrup has. I personally use “*biscotti novaresi*” since it is a local specialty of Novara, where I am from, but sponge fingers can easily be used in their place.”

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Mousse di castagne Chestnut Mousse

Serves 6

250g (½ lb) peeled chestnuts
80g (scant ½ cup) sugar
150ml (scant ¾ cup) whipping cream
30g (4 tablespoons) unsweetened cocoa powder
100ml (scant ½ cup) fresh cream
100g (3½ oz) semi-sweet chocolate, 65-70% cocoa mass
150ml (scant ¾ cup) milk
200g (scant ½ lb) puff pastry dough

Prepare the mousse:

Boil the chestnuts for 40 minutes in slightly salted water. Drain them and let them cool slightly, then blend them into a paste with the cocoa powder. Let the mixture cool completely. In a well-chilled bowl whip the cream and very carefully fold it into the cooled chestnut mixture. Refrigerate for 2 hours.

Prepare the sauce:

Heat the milk to 60°C (140°F) and add the semi-sweet chocolate, stirring until it melts completely. Set aside and keep warm in a double boiler.

Prepare the puff pastry:

Roll out the dough and cut it into triangles 10-12cm (4-5 inches) per side. Bake them at 200°C/400°F/gas mark 6 until golden.

Place 2 tablespoons of liquid cream onto each plate. On top place a puff pastry triangle and cover it with 2 balls of the mousse.

Alternate layers of pastry, cream and the mousse. Spoon the warm chocolate sauce over the top and serve.

Chef Ugo Alciati says, “Traditionally in chestnut season one makes *Marrons Glacés*. I propose trying this mousse, which is easier to make. It can be made even simpler by serving the mousse in individual cups and garnishing it with the triangles of puff pastry and the warm chocolate sauce.”

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Torta di farina di riso Venere e mele
Apple and Venere Rice Cake

Serves 6

Preheat oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4

3 eggs
180g (scant 1 cup) sugar
180g (³/₄ cup) butter, room temperature
120g (1¹/₄ cup) flour
60g (²/₃ cup) black Venere rice flour
15g (4 teaspoons) baking powder
6 apples, peeled, cored and sliced

Sift together the cake and rice flours with the baking powder and set aside. Cream the eggs with the sugar and when frothy add the softened butter and blend well. Stir in the flour mixture and mix well. Fold in the sliced apples and mix very gently. Butter and flour a 25cm (10 inch) cake pan and pour in the batter, spreading it out evenly with a spatula. Sprinkle the top with sugar and bake at 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4 for 40 minutes.

Chef Mariangela Marone says, “In Piedmont there are many versions of “*Torta di riso*”, both savoury and sweet. For my version I decided to use black Venere rice flour, which is seductively and intensely scented, resulting in a cake which is an excellent accompaniment for tea.”

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Glossary of Piedmontese Terms

Translator's note: It is interesting to note that the dialect of the Piedmont region (*Piedmontese*) is similar to French, obviously reflecting the area's proximity to France. Throughout the region one hears myriad dialectal variations and there can even be differences in as small a geographic distance as a few miles, both lexically and in pronunciation. For that reason it should be remembered that the list below reflects the dialect of Alba.

Aiet: spring garlic
Aviè: bees
Bagna caoda: garlic and anchovy based sauce served with raw vegetables for dipping
Bagnè 'nt l'òli: vegetables dipped in oil
Bagnet ross: literally red sauce; a seasoned tomato-sauce based condiment served with boiled meats
Bagnet Verd: literally green sauce; a parsley-based condiment served with boiled meats
Bate l' gran: to thresh
Batsoà: Pigs feet, from the French: *bas de soie* [silk stockings]
Basilà: soup dish
Bech: male goat
Bibinera: large terracotta oven-proof casserole with a well-fitting lid
Bonèt: chocolate flan
Bota: bottle
Branda: grappa,
Bruss: a blend of fermented cheeses
Caponèt: stuffed zucchini flowers
Cartonè: carter
Casadorin: small salami (from the Italian *cacciatolino*)
Cocone: Caesar's mushrooms
Cognà: mixed fruit condiment
Côi: cabbage
Cròtin: cellar
Dianèt: small terracotta bowl
Dobiòn: sieve
Fricciu: fritter
Frisse: mixed pork bundles
Grilèt: salad bowl
Grive: thrushes
Lasagnòt: ribbon pasta
Mare: mother

Mitonà: from the French *mitonner* lengthy cooking of bread in broth
Marenda sinòira: a late afternoon meal, usually for a group, which substitutes dinner

Orion: pig's ear

Oliè: itinerant market people who transported wine from the Langhe to Liguria, returning with oil

Palòt: a small wooden spatula-like scoop

Peila: a copper saucepan with a curved handle

Povron 'd la stubia: peppers planted after the wheat harvest

Pressia: rolling pin

Puccia: polenta with cabbage and pork

Ramassin: wild plums

Ravanin: radish

Rolade: veal rolls

Rubatà: hand rolled *grissini* [bread sticks]

Sarsèt: valerian salad

Sausa d'avìe: honey, mustard and walnut sauce

Scudlìn: small bowl

Seleri: celery

Siulòt: spring onion/small onion

Surì: the part of a hill which receives the most sun

Tajarin: tagliatelle

Tirolin: a long thin loaf of bread which is uneven and rough on top

Tomatìche: tomatoes

Topina: preserving jar

Trifolau: truffle hunter

Vacchèria: the land south of the Tanaro River going from Alba towards

Magliano Alfieri

English-Italian Index

Agnolotti with Gravy – <i>Agnolotti al sugo di arrosto</i>	60
Alba Kisses – <i>Albesi al Barolo</i>	171
Alba Nougat – <i>Torrone d'Alba</i>	170
Anchovies in Green Sauce – <i>Acciughe al verde</i>	44
Apple Fritters – <i>"Fricceu" con mele</i>	167
Asparagus with Butter – <i>Asparagi al burro</i>	104
Aspic – <i>Gelatina</i>	106
Bagna cauda – <i>"Bagna caoda"</i>	102
Baked Chickpea Frittata – <i>Torta di ceci</i>	145
Baked Pears – <i>Pere cotte al forno</i>	162
Baked Spinach and Rice Frittata – <i>Torta di riso e spinaci</i>	144
Black Pudding – <i>Torta di sangue</i>	146
Boiled Meats – <i>Bolliti</i>	134
Braised Veal in Barolo Wine – <i>Brasato al Barolo</i>	121
Broth – <i>Brodo</i>	65
Broth and Bread Soup – <i>"Supa mitonà"</i>	82
Buckwheat Polenta – <i>Polenta saracena</i>	79
Caesar's Mushroom Salad – <i>"Cocone" in insalata</i>	47
Capon Galantine – <i>Cappone in galantina</i>	114
"Capricious" Frittata – <i>Frittata "Rognosa"</i>	84
Chicken alla Cacciatora (Hunter's Chicken) <i>Pollo alla cacciatora</i>	128
Chicken Marengo – <i>Pollo alla Marengo</i>	130
Chickpea Soup with Pork Ribs <i>Minestrone di ceci e di costine di maiale</i>	68
Chocolate Flan – <i>"Bonèt"</i>	168
Deep-fried Sweet Semolina Squares – <i>Frittura dolce</i>	95

English Trifle – <i>Zuppa inglese</i>	152	Pheasant in “ <i>Salmi</i> ” Sauce – <i>Fagiano in salmì</i>	123
Fava Bean Soup – <i>Minestrone di fave</i>	70	Piedmontese Risotto – <i>Risotto alla piemontese</i>	57
Finanziera – <i>Finanziera</i>	108	Piedmontese Steak Tartare – <i>Carne cruda in insalata</i>	48
Fonduta with Truffles – <i>Fonduta con tartufi</i>	110	Pig’s head – <i>Oriòn</i>	141
Fresh Sheep and Goat’s Cheese – “ <i>Toma</i> ”	148	Poached Eggs with Tomato Sauce – <i>Uova in camicia</i>	101
Fried Porcini Mushrooms – <i>Funghi fritti</i>	97	Polenta – <i>Polenta</i>	71
Fried Snails – <i>Lumache fritte</i>	89	Polenta Baked with Hot Sauce – <i>Polenta con “bagna d’infern”</i>	74
Frittata with Costmary – <i>Frittata con l’erba di San Pietro</i>	83	Polenta and Buttermilk – “ <i>Giuncà</i> ”	147
Fritto Misto – <i>Fritto misto</i>	98	Polenta with Cabbage – <i>Polenta al cavolo</i>	72
Garlic Bruschetta – “ <i>Soma d’aj</i> ”	46	Polenta with Cabbage and Pork – “ <i>Puccia</i> ”	73
Green Sauce – <i>Bagnèt verd</i>	137	Polenta with Cod and Onions – <i>Polenta con merluzzo e cipolle</i>	76
Handmade Macaroni – “ <i>Macaron del frèt</i> ”	64	Polenta and Cod with Parsley Sauce <i>Polenta con merluzzo al verde</i>	75
Hare in Wine Sauce – <i>Lepre al civet</i>	126	Polenta with Sheep’s Milk Sauce – <i>Polenta con tartara salata</i>	77
Hazelnut Cake – <i>Torta di nocciole</i>	157	Pork Roast in Milk – <i>Arrosto di maiale al latte</i>	120
Jam Tart – <i>Torta di pasta frolla</i>	154	Potato Gnocchi with Tomato Sauce – <i>Gnocchi al pomodoro</i>	62
Langa Pork Hocks – “ <i>Batsoà</i> ”	96	Rabbit with Peppers – <i>Coniglio con peperoni</i>	118
Langhe Fruit Condiment – “ <i>Cognà</i> ”	139	Red Sauce – <i>Bagnèt ross</i>	136
Lasagne with Sweetbreads, Sausage Meat and Rosemary <i>Lasagne al sangue</i>	80	Rice With Cabbage – “ <i>Ris e còi</i> ”	79
Lemon Almond Cream – <i>Tartara dolce</i>	160	Risotto with Thrushes – <i>Risotto con le “grive”</i>	56
Liver Pâtè – <i>Patè di fegato</i>	55	River Shrimp – <i>Gamberi</i>	112
Marinated Fried Chub <i>Cavedani “Barb” fritti ed in carpione</i>	113	Roast Lamb – <i>Agnello al forno</i>	115
Marinated Zucchini with Eggs – <i>Carpione di zucchini e uova</i>	100	Roast Young Goat – <i>Capretto arrosto</i>	127
Marrons Glacés – <i>Marrons glacés</i>	165	Savoury Rice Tart – <i>Torta di riso</i>	143
Martine Pear Tart – <i>Timballo di pere Martine</i>	158	Sharp Cheese Spread – “ <i>Bruss</i> ”	151
Mixed Pork Bundles – “ <i>Frisse</i> ”	94	Snail Frittata – <i>Frittata di lumache</i>	88
Mock Stuffed “ <i>Grive</i> ” – “ <i>Grive</i> ” della Langa	92	Snails Dipped in Oil – <i>Lumache “Bagnà ’nt l’òli”</i>	87
Onion Frittata – <i>Frittata di cipolle</i>	86	Soft Sheep’s Milk Cheese – “ <i>Brussina</i> ”	150
Palmina’s Duck – <i>Anitra di Palmina</i>	116	Stuffed Baked Peaches – <i>Pesche ripiene</i>	161
Panna cotta – <i>Panna cotta</i>	164	Stuffed Onions – <i>Cipolle ripiene</i>	91
Partridges in “ <i>Salmi</i> ” Sauce – <i>Pernici in salmì</i>	124	Stuffed Zucchini Flowers – “ <i>Caponèt</i> ”	90
		Sweet Lies – <i>Bugie</i>	166

Tagliatelle with Chicken Liver Sauce "Tajarin" al sugo di fegatini	58
Tangy Honey Walnut Sauce – Sausa d'avè	138
Threshers' Soup – Minestra del "Bate 'l gran"	66
Polenta Cookies – Paste di meliga	163
Pork Tongue in Spicy Sauce – Lingua al giardino	140
Tripe – Trippa	132
Tuna Pâtè – Patè di tonno	54
Tuna Sauce for Potato Gnocchi – Gnocchi al tonno (salsa per)	63
Valerian Salad with Eggs, Tuna and Scallions "Sarsèt" con uova, tonno e cipolline	50
Veal Rolls – Rolade	142
Veal with Tonnè Sauce– Vitello "Tonnè"	52
Vegetables Dipped in Oil– Bagnè 'nt l'òli	43
Woodcock with Polenta – Beccaccia su crostone di polenta	122
Zabaglione – Zabajone	156

Italian-English Index

Acciughe al verde – Anchovies in Green Sauce	44
Agnello al forno – Roast Lamb	115
Agnolotti al sugo di arrosto – Agnolotti with Gravy	60
Albesi al Barolo – Alba Kisses	171
Anitra di Palmina – Palmina's Duck	116
Arrosto di maiale al latte – Pork Roast in Milk	120
Asparagi al burro – Asparagus with Butter	104
"Bagna caoda" – Bagna cauda	102
"Bagnè 'nt l'òli" – Vegetables Dipped in Oil	43
"Bagnèt ross" – Red Sauce	136
"Bagnèt verd" – Green Sauce	137
"Batsoà" – Langa Pork Hocks	96
Beccaccia su crostone di polenta – Woodcock with Polenta	122
Bolliti – Boiled Meats	134
"Bonèt" – Chocolate Flan	168
Brasato al Barolo – Braised Veal in Barolo Wine	121
Brodo – Broth	65
"Bruss" – Sharp Cheese Spread	151
"Brussina" – Soft Sheep's Milk Cheese	150
Bugie – Sweet Lies	166
"Caponèt" – Stuffed Zucchini Flowers	90
Cappone in galantina – Capon Galantine	114
Capretto arrosto – Roast Young Goat	127
Carne cruda in insalata – Piedmontese Steak Tartare	48
Carpione di zucchini e uova – Marinated Zucchini with Eggs	100
Cavedani "Barb" fritti ed in carpione Marinated Fried Chub	113

<i>Cipolle ripiene</i> – Stuffed Onions	91	<i>Minestrone di fave</i> – Fava Bean Soup	70
“ <i>Cocone</i> ” <i>in insalata</i> – Caesar’s Mushroom Salad	47	<i>Oriòn</i> – Pig’s head	141
“ <i>Cognà</i> ” – Langhe Fruit Condiment	139	<i>Panna cotta</i> – Panna cotta	164
<i>Coniglio con peperoni</i> – Rabbit with Peppers	118	<i>Paste di meliga</i> – Polenta Cookies	163
<i>Fagiano in salmì</i> – Pheasant in “ <i>Salmì</i> ” Sauce	124	<i>Patè di fegato</i> – Liver Pâtè	55
<i>Finanziera</i> – Finanziera	108	<i>Patè di tonno</i> – Tuna Pâtè	54
<i>Fonduta con tartufi</i> – Fonduta with Truffles	110	<i>Pere cotte al forno</i> – Baked Pears	162
“ <i>Fricceu</i> ” <i>con mele</i> – Apple Fritters	167	<i>Pernici in salmì</i> – Partridges in “ <i>Salmì</i> ” Sauce	124
“ <i>Frisse</i> ” – Mixed Pork Bundles	94	<i>Pesche ripiene</i> – Stuffed Baked Peaches	161
<i>Frittata con l’erba di San Pietro</i> – Frittata with Costmary	83	<i>Polenta</i> – Polenta	71
<i>Frittata di cipolle</i> – Onion Frittata	86	<i>Polenta al cavolo</i> – Polenta with Cabbage	72
<i>Frittata di lumache</i> – Snail Frittata	88	<i>Polenta con “bagna d’infern”</i> – Polenta Baked with Hot Sauce	74
<i>Frittata “Rognosa”</i> – “Capricious” Frittata	84	<i>Polenta con merluzzo al verde</i>	75
<i>Fritto misto</i> – Fritto Misto	98	Polenta and Cod with Parsley Sauce	
<i>Frittura dolce</i> – Deep-fried Sweet Semolina Squares	95	<i>Polenta con merluzzo e cipolle</i>	76
<i>Funghi fritti</i> – Fried Porcini Mushrooms	97	Polenta with Cod and Onions	
<i>Gamberi</i> – River Shrimp	114	<i>Polenta con tartara salata</i> – Polenta with Sheep’s Milk Sauce	77
<i>Gelatina</i> – Aspic	106	<i>Polenta saracena</i> – Buckwheat Polenta	78
“ <i>Giuncà</i> ” – Polenta and Buttermilk	147	<i>Pollo alla cacciatora</i>	128
<i>Gnocchi al pomodoro</i> – Potato Gnocchi in Tomato Sauce	62	Chicken alla Cacciatora (Hunter’s Chicken)	
<i>Gnocchi al tonno (salsa per)</i> – Tuna Sauce for Potato Gnocchi	63	<i>Pollo alla Marengo</i> – Chicken Marengo	130
“ <i>Grive</i> ” <i>della Langa</i> – Mock Stuffed “ <i>Grive</i> ”	94	“ <i>Puccia</i> ” – Polenta with Cabbage and Pork	73
<i>Lasagne al sangue</i> – Lasagne with Sweetbreads, Sausage Meat and Rosemary	80	“ <i>Ris e còi</i> ” – Rice With Cabbage	79
<i>Lepre al civet</i> – Hare in Wine Sauce	126	<i>Risotto con le “grive”</i> – Risotto with Thrushes	56
<i>Lingua al giardino</i> – Pork Tongue in Spicy Sauce	140	<i>Risotto alla piemontese</i> – Piedmontese Risotto	57
<i>Lumache “Bagnà ’nt l’òli”</i> – Snails Dipped in Oil	87	<i>Rolade</i> – Veal Rolls	142
<i>Lumache fritte</i> – Fried Snails	89	“ <i>Sarsèt</i> ” <i>con uova, tonno e cipolline</i>	50
“ <i>Macaron del frèt</i> ” – Handmade Macaroni	64	Valerian Salad with Eggs, Tuna and Scallions	
<i>Marrons glacés</i> – Marrons Glacés	165	<i>Sausa d’avie</i> – Tangy Honey Walnut Sauce	138
<i>Minestra del “Bate ’l gran”</i> – Threshers’ Soup	66	“ <i>Soma d’aj</i> ” – Garlic Bruschetta	46
<i>Minestrone di ceci e di costine di maiale</i>	68	“ <i>Supa mitonà</i> ” – Broth and Bread Soup	82
Chickpea Soup with Pork Ribs		“ <i>Tajarin</i> ” <i>al sugo di fegatini</i>	58
		<i>Tagliatelle</i> with Chicken Liver Sauce	

*Finito di stampare il 28 settembre 2007 presso
le Officine Grafiche di Comunicazione
Strada San Michele, 83 - Bra (CN) - Italy.*