



THE **TASTE** OF  
A TRAVEL



IN THE PROVINCE OF **CATANIA**




PROVINCIA REGIONALE DI CATANIA



IP.S.S.A.R. "K.WOJTYLA" DI CATANIA





A trip to our region is always a deep immersion using all the senses to feel the special atmosphere full of colors, fragrances, sounds and tastes. And speaking of food, it means to start a journey within a journey.

The warmth of the sun enhances the sweet smell of the land and mixes it with the scent of the Mediterranean Sea brought by the sea breeze. On Mount Etna as well as in the plains of Catania and Caltagirone it is a stream of intense fragrances and fast colors. The flavours of this generous land are marked and unique and they balance themselves between sea and land, providing two different ways of cooking.

This guide is meant then to lead the visitor to the discovery of those foods and typical recipes of the Catania province: cheeses, fruit, vegetables, fish, and grain that are fundamental for the preparation of those typical dishes of which the people of Catania are proud of.

Some of the towns under the province administration are not mentioned due to the fact that they lack remarkable specialty dishes. But the variety of the dishes, the intense odours and the many spices and products used make the gastronomic choice so wide that the careful visitors longing for knowledge will find themselves in a real journey of the taste.

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# CATANIA

Speaking of food is a must in Catania, a way of celebrating its sensual pleasure. An exuberant, baroque and controversial kitchen. The starting



point suggested to the traveller willing to explore the city is to take a peep at the traditional markets of the *Pescheria* (Fish market) and of Piazza Carlo Alberto, *a fera o' luni* (the Monday street market) - you will be charmed by the abundance of food, its excellent quality and its good prices. Everything looks special, from garlic to oregano, from the heaps of organic vegetables displayed on the stalls to the ample variety of fruit, citruses first.

Close to the Dome, flanking the fountain of the Amenano river, the so called *acqua o' linzolu* (sheet water), the traveler can visit the *pescheria* (fish market). A holy fish temple. The stalls brimming with ice display tuna and sword fish, silver pilchards, that must not be confused with the delicious anchovies (*Masculini* or *anciova*, cured anchovies), and the shining scabbard fish fillets. They are cooked in plenty of ways - grilled and seasoned with a vinaigrette sauce (*salmoriglio*), fried or sprinkled with vinegar and sugar to obtain a delicate balance between sweet and sour. The most curious of you, in search of the best typical flavours, should also taste *u mauru*, a seaweed that is eaten raw with a sprinkle of lemon.

## TRADITIONAL DISHES

The kitchen is the key to the people's reading. In Catania, it acquires a strong and joyful nature as its inhabitants are. An indelible memory that will stay with you forever will be the unique taste of the dishes that you will appreciate in the many restaurants and eateries that you meet along the narrow streets of the historical centre: pilchards- stuffed (*sarde a beccafico*) or seasoned with an onion sauce (*cipollata*), pasta with wild fennels, fried cakes of whitebait, spaghetti with cuttlefish black ink sauce or with wild fennel, *caponata* (aubergines, potatoes and peppers diced and fried and dressed in a sweet and sour sauce), *maccu*, mashed broad beans seasoned with extra virgin olive oil or fried and flavoured with wild fennel, and *bastardo affogato* (simmered cauliflower). The most typical dish in Catania is *pasta alla Norma*, macaroni seasoned with tomato purée, crisp fried aubergines, green and smelly basil leaves and plenty of salted ricotta cheese grated on top. It takes its name from an opera by Vincenzo Bellini, the famous musician born in Catania, and pays an homage to his great skill.

## BREAKFAST IN CATANIA



The typical breakfast in Catania, especially in summer, used to be and is still the granita - a refined lemon or almond or chocolate flavored ice-slush. It was traditionally accompanied by fresh crisp bread, but with the time it has been replaced by the typical Sicilian *brioscia* (a kind of brioche), that is prepared from a yeasted egg-based dough and has a semi-spherical shape topped by a small bun (called *tuppu*, chignon). Every café

has its own specialities as far as granite is concerned. Some of them offer a very good toasted almond granita, some others a pistachio-based one, some else are specialized in fruit-based granite, such as mulberries. Other breakfast specialties are *cornetti* (croissants), *treccine* (small tress), *iris*, *panzerotti* (baked scones filled with custard or chocolate cream), *graffe*, and *raviole* which are preferred in seasons other than summer.

## PASTRIES AND CONFECTIONERY IN CATANIA

Among the most typical and traditional sweets the first place goes to the *cannolo di ricotta*, a crisp waffle filled with ricotta cheese and garnished with chocolate flakes and ground pistachio, stuffed at the very last moment before eating. The *cassata* and the smaller *cassatelle* - the so called *minnuzzi i Sant'Aita* (\*) - both ricotta based, are famous as well, together with *Frutta Martorana*. The latter is a speciality made from almond flour and sugar, very characteristic because it faithfully reproduces fruit,



vegetables and fish.

The *olivette di Sant'Agata* are prepared on the occasion of the city patron feast of St. Agatha. They are delicious olive shaped sweets made from green almond paste and take their name just from their shape. We can also remember almond, nut and pistachio pastes. The ice-cream parlours in Catania are particularly renowned for their exquisite home-made ice creams, of various flavours, and the so-called *pezzi duri* (hard pieces), so often exalted by the Sicilian writers as the triumph of gluttony.

Another typical speciality in Catania are the *biscotti della monaca* (Nun's biscuits), S-shaped biscuits flavoured with fennel seeds. They take this name because by the end of '800 a house nun started to make and sell them.

(\*) The *cassatella* is actually a small Sicilian 'cassata' in the shape of a female breast as a symbol of the Saint's martyrdom to whom they were torn off.

## GASTRONOMIC SPECIALITIES

Gastronomic specialities as *tavola calda* can't be missing in the bars and rotisseries of Catania. They are halfway between snacks and street food, a



half day break or a light lunch or dinner. The main gastronomic specialities are: *Pizzetta*, *arancino*, *cartocciata*, *Bolognese*, *bomba*, *sfoglia*, *cipollina*, *siciliana*.

The *pizzetta* (a small pizza) is generally round, quite thick, prepared with tomato purée, mozzarella cheese, black olives and oregano.

The *arancino* (a deep-fried rice ball coated with breadcrumbs)

can be considered the king of the Sicilian gastronomy, a fried rice divinity hiding wonderful surprises. The first secret of the *arancino* lies in its form.

- Classic - in the shape of an inverted cone: with meat sauce and chunks of meat;
- Round - white (with mozzarella, ham and butter);
- Oval - filled with vegetables;
- Wrapped - inside a pastry crust or a pastry, baked.

The *cipollina* (small onion) is a light puff pastry case containing tomato purée, mozzarella cheese and abundant sautéed onion; sometimes ham is added.

The *siciliana* – fried or baked - is a type of *calzone*, folded and stuffed with *tuma*, a typical salt-free underripe cheese and salted anchovies.

The *Bolognese* is a small pizza covered with a light puff pastry and filled with mozzarella cheese, ham and hard boiled eggs.

The *cartocciata* is folded in half and baked, its pastry is soft and thick, reminding the brioche. It's stuffed with ham, mozzarella cheese and tomato purée.

## BREAD AND BAKERS

Catania has an incredible variety of bread, you only need to get into whatever baker's to realize that: semolina bread, whole grain, soya bread, with sesame seeds; of different shapes – "u cucciddatu", easily distinguishable for its round shape and a hole in the center, the *mafalda* (a braid- shaped roll),



the *gemellini* (twin oval buns), just to mention the most renowned ones. Bakers also prepare pizza and *scacciate* (stuffed pies). *Scacciate* with *tuma* cheese and anchovies or with cauliflower, sausage and *tuma* cheese are among the most famous and are prepared especially at

Christmas time. They also bake whole onions, aubergines and peppers and then display them on big black sheets.

Other specialities that can be found both in the baker's and in the bar are '*nzuddi*' (\*2), *totò*, *bersaglieri* and *rami í Napuli* (Naples copper) (\*3), that are prepared in November on the Dead Souls' event. At Carnival time, we find the *chiacchere* (chats), traditional fried short- biscuits.

(\*2) Literal translation of Vincenzi, the '*nzuddi*' are dry biscuits flavoured with orange rind and garnished with an almond on top. They are so called because they were produced by the nuns Vincenziane (belonging to the order of St. Vincent) .

(\*3) The origin of the name might be traced back to the unification of the Two Sicilies (Naples and Sicily) in 1816. On that occasion King Charles de Bourbon ordered to mint a copper coin, a poor material substituting gold and silver that were in short supply at that time. Thus the



Sicilians reproduced the copper coins in the kitchen and created a biscuit with a soft core covered by a chocolate icing and flavoured with cinnamon, cloves and orange essence.

## FRIGGITORE (SHOPS SELLING FRIED FOOD)

Originally, they were located only in the historical centre but now they are scattered all over, both in the city and in the villages nearby.

They prepare sweet and savory *crispelle* (fritters). The sweet ones are plunged into honey, the savoury ones have got two shapes – round, filled with *ricotta* cheese, or elongate, with anchovy.

The *crispellaro* (the man who prepares *crispelle*, fritters) makes them “while you wait” (often just on the street), kneading a very fluid dough with extraordinary skill and hand movement technique. Then he fries them floating in a huge frying pan of 1 mt diameter and 30 cm depth.

## ARRUSTI E MANGIA (GRILL AND EAT)

In Catania, a long established street food tradition rules. As long as you reach Piazza Castello Ursino or via Plebiscito, you will find plenty of butchers turning into typical eating places at nightfall.



You will see slices of horse meat, horse meat-balls, delicious fresh onions wrapped with bacon, all being cooked on huge barbecues. They will serve you with these deliciousness inside a grilled bun.

Here and then, you will find the *putie* (wine and

food places), selling wine and traditional food. There you will have the opportunity of tasting the pork jelly, *u zuzzu*, seasoned with lemon juice, or trying best quality cheese and cold cuts together with local wine drawn off directly from the cask by the innkeeper (*u putiaru*).

In the same area of the historical centre, you may happen to find tiny street eating places with a cauldron (*a quarara*) on an open fire. Here, they prepare *u sangeli*, a typical Sicilian sausage-shaped dish made from the pork bowel filled with the animal's blood, and the tripe (boiled guts).

## I CHIOSCHI (THE KIOSKS)



The kiosk (*chiosco*) for the sale of refreshing beverages has always been a meeting point in Catania, night and day, and has now become a real "cult" in the Catanese's life.

The evolution of the way of preparing and selling beverages can be traced back to the sellers of water and *zammù* (an anise seed syrup), who used to quench people's thirst during the hot weather in the '800. With the passing of time, this street

activity has changed and fixed stands of hexagonal form have appeared, scattering around the many squares both in the old and in the new town. As in the past, today sugar, fruit, water, soda, measures and presses are unfailing elements in a kiosk. The peculiarity stands in the fact that the *chioscari* (the kiosk's owners) themselves produce the syrups for the beverages: tangerine, tamarind, orgeat.

But the traditional beverage is definitely soda, lemon and salt, which has a highly refreshing and digestive effect; very popular are also lemon and tangerine, that combines the sour of the lemon and the sweet of the tangerine, tamarind with lemon and baking soda, another very good remedy for the digestion, *sciampagnino* (citron juice with soda water) and the *completo* (citron juice, fresh lemon juice, anise seed syrup and soda).

## Pasta alla Norma



### INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4)

FOR THE SAUCE: 40 mL. extra virgin olive oil, 1 chopped garlic clove, 600 mL. tomato purée, salt and pepper to season, plenty of basil leaves. FOR THE FRYING: 300 mL. frying olive oil, 2 sliced aubergines (previously salted and rinsed). Cheese to sprinkle on top: salted *ricotta* cheese.

Brown the chopped garlic clove, add the tomato purée, season with salt and pepper and simmer. Flavour with fresh basil leaves. Fry the aubergines.

Cook pasta, drain and toss with the tomato purée and the sliced aubergines. Sprinkle with abundant salted *ricotta* cheese and serve.

## Bastardo affogato (stewed cauliflower)

INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4 PEOPLE): 800 gr. cauliflower, 150 mL. extra virgin olive oil, 250 gr. onion. 20 gr. salted anchovies, 100 gr. black olives, 150 gr. fresh peppered cheese, 20 g. Sicilian *pecorino* cheese, 250 mL. red wine, salt and pepper.

Put some oil in a pan. Make a layer of cauliflower cut into slices, add the onion cut 'à la julienne', the stoned olives, small pieces of anchovies, flakes of peppered cheese. Sprinkle with some oil and some *pecorino*. Keep on making layers of cauliflower and of seasoning while they last. Put on the fire and drizzle some wine over. Cover with a lid and cook for at least 50 minutes or until the

cauliflower prove well cooked and dry.

## Caponata with aubergines Catania style



**INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4):** gr. 800 aubergines, gr. 400 green peppers, gr. 250 onion, gr. 150 celery, gr. 75 tomato concentrate, gr. 100 green stoned olives, gr. 25 capers, gr. 40 pine nuts, gr. 50 raisins, mL 100 white vinegar, gr. 100 sugar, extra virgin olive oil, salt, ground black pepper.

For the sweet and sour sauce: Brown the julienned onions, add sugar and salt. Drizzle some vinegar over them and let evaporate. Add some tomato concentrate, dilute with vegetable stock and finish cooking.

Chop and blanch the celery, do the same with the stoned olives and the capers. Dice the aubergines and the peppers, fry them separately in plenty of olive oil. Soak the raisins and toast the pine nuts.

Combine the fried aubergines, peppers, pinenuts, raisins, celery, olives, capers and the sweet and sour sauce. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Combine all the ingredients on a slow fire for some minutes. Flavour with abundant basil leaves.

## Pasta with cuttlefish black ink sauce "pasta cco niuru re sicci"

INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4): 40 gr. extra virgin olive oil, 15 gr. chopped onion, 1 chopped garlic clove, 600 gr. cuttlefish (leaving intact the ink sacs), mL 50 white wine, 150 gr. tomato concentrate, chopped parsley, salt and pepper to season, 400 gr. spaghetti.

Brown the chopped onion in a little oil, add the minced garlic and the parsley. Add the cuttlefish cut into small pieces. Sprinkle with white wine, allow to evaporate, then put the tomato concentrate. Season to taste with salt and pepper and cook. Nearly at the end of cooking add the cuttlefish ink.

P.S. - Another version of pasta with black ink sauce is *u ripiddu nivicatu* created by a chef of Catania. In the Sicilian dialect the *ripiddu* is the black lava rock gravel that can be found at the foot of Mount Etna. It is a special rice-based dish (*risotto*) symbolizing the giant Etna, with cuttlefish black ink sauce, tomato purée and fresh *ricotta* featuring lava stone, lava flow and snow respectively.



# THE COAST

## ACICASTELLO

Built on a huge lava stone outcrop, the *Castello* (Castle) looks massive in the square, as a ship bow. At its back lies the “*Riviera dei Limoni*”. Walking along the narrow lanes we are struck by the smell of a cuisine which is traditionally linked to fish. The fish stalls are full of sea urchins, clams, seafood, *occhi i voi* (a local univalve mollusk) and *masculini* (typical anchovies of the Ionian Sea). The *masculini da magghia* (a trammel used for fishing) are eaten in various ways: in oil and lemon marinade or cooked with wild fennels and peas to season spaghetti.



### **Pasta che masculini e' u finocchiu rizzu (Pasta with anchovies and wild fennel)**

**INGREDIENTS:** Small macaroni, anchovies, extra virgin olive oil, garlic, parsley, wild fennels.

Cook the wild fennels. Drain and chop them roughly. Keep the cooking water aside. Chop the garlic, brown it with some oil then add the chopped wild fennels. Cook to taste, add the anchovies and keep on the fire for some minutes more. Boil the macaroni in the wild fennel cooking water. When it's just hard to the bite, drain and sauté with the wild fennel and anchovy seasoning. Sprinkle with toasted breadcrumbs and serve.

## ACITREZZA

The seafaring village of Acitrezza swarms with multi-coloured boats and fishers reminding us of Verga and of his novel *"The Malavoglia"*.

The small hamlet has kept unchanged its ancient charm. Its cuisine has the taste of the sea. Here you can try *u mauru*, a fleshy seaweed that is eaten raw dressed with lemon juice. Due to the abundance of fish, shellfish and clams, this food is always on the menu of the numerous local restaurants that serve it stewed, fried or grilled.

During the Feast of St. Giovanni, in June, the pantomime *"u pisci a mari"* (the fish in the sea) is acted. It is a fishing-parody of sword fish and the protagonists are the fishermen and the rais (the person who directs the fishing). From a high rock the rais watches for the fish in the water and gives instructions to his fellows to catch it among the encouragements and the shouts of the audience standing on the dock and on the boats.

The fish is represented by a skilled swimmer who hides himself behind the boats and is eventually caught. But just when he is going to be killed, he breaks free and runs away. A representation of the eternal struggle for surviving in a land whose sustenance is fish.

### Spaghetti with sea urchin pulp

**INGREDIENTS:** spaghetti, extra virgin olive oil, garlic, parsley, red hot chili pepper, fresh sea urchin pulp, salt.

Brown the garlic in some extra virgin olive oil, add the chili pepper. Cook the spaghetti, transfer in the pan with the aromatized oil and sauté. Switch off then add the sea urchin pulp. Mix and serve with a sprinkle of chopped parsley.





## ACIREALE



The baroque style Acireale is situated in the centre of the *Riviera dei Limoni* (The Lemon grove Riviera ) on a very fertile terrace called *Timpa*. The Town of the mythological Cyclopes is rich in water springs and citrus fruit; lemons and oranges, olive crops, figs and lush grapes are grown here. In the summer the granita becomes a ritual - lemon, mulberry, coffee, almond or chocolate; it is always served with big hot brioche. Acireale's cuisine, seafaring and rural at the same time, follows the seasons; its recipes have a secret, the use of very fresh quality ingredients.

Typical dishes of the town are *polpette ne pampini da lumia* (balls grilled on lemon leaves) - minced meat or fish balls seasoned with salt, eggs, grated *pecorino* cheese, chopped parsley and cooked on the charcoal between two big lemon leaves – and *frittelle di nunnatu*. (fish fritters)

*Nunnatu* (whitebait) designates small fishes that are just born. It can belong to different species: sardines (*muccu*), anchovies, *pagello* (pandoras). *Mucco* comes from the Arab term *sumuk* (fish) and is used all along the Ionic coast of Sicily.

Season the whitebait with eggs, chopped parsley, salt and *pecorino* cheese. Make small balls, fry them in plenty of hot oil and eat immediately.

## ACI BONACCORSI

The lands around Aci Bonaccorsi are rich in citrus fruits and grapes; the production of local cheese is of great value. Excellent the fresh *ricotta* that marks out the many culinary specialities in Catania and its province. Great care is given to the seasoning, salting and baking of the *ricotta*, shaped in various forms: a *torretta* (tower-shaped), *canestrata* (basket-shaped), seasoned in the *cavagna* (a typical sheath-shaped straw container for *ricotta*).

## ACI SANT'ANTONIO

The hamlet has a medieval story marked by numerous Mount Etna eruptions. Citrus fruits and grapes are leaders in the local economy and also land of the famous *verdello* lemons. The traditional pastry shows excellent almond, honey, pistachio and fresh *ricotta* cakes.

### Verdello lemon liqueur

**INGREDIENTS:** 3 big *verdello* lemons, 200 ml. alcohol base, 300 gr. sugar, 300 ml. water.



Make an infusion of lemon rind and alcohol and steep it for at least five days.

Boil sugar in water, then cool. Add the *Verdello* Lemon infusion.

Leave to rest for at least 7 days, then strain and pour the liqueur in a nice container.

## GIARRE

In ancient times the deep wood of Aci stretched over the lands North-West of Acireale, in the old County of Mascali. Following the Bishop Caracciolo's will, it was deforested and grapes were grown on its place. The town of Giarre was set up on its verge. Its name comes from *giare*, the *terracotta* containers used to hold goods like wine, oil and cereals. Today, the economy is based on the production of quality potatoes, citrus fruits, cereals, cherries and very good wine. Back in the 1500, under the Spanish rule, the preparation of homemade bread was definitely a ritual. The roughest and untreated flours were used by the poor families, while the rich ones made use of the *Majorca* flour which corresponds to our soft 00 wheat flour. *Scacciàte* and homemade bread were prepared from this flour. Cooked in an olive tree wood-fired oven, the bread was seasoned (*cunzatu*) hot with extra virgin olive oil, oregano, chili pepper and salt.

## Scacciata with potatoes and sausages

INGREDIENTS: 800 gr semolina, 16 gr. brewer's yeast, 15 gr. salt, a teaspoon sugar, 2 spoonful oil

Place the flour like a fountain; in the well, put the extra virgin olive oil, the brewer's yeast previously melt in very little warm water together with a pinch of sugar and the salt. Start kneading by adding the water a little at a time until you get a soft and smooth dough. Leave to rise. Roll out the dough getting two thin loops. Line a round greased sheet with one of the two circles, place a layer of round sliced potatoes, previously cooked in salted water, flavor with slices of *caciocavallo* (cheese from whole cow milk), *tuma* (fresh cheese) or *primosale* (underripe, soft cheese), fillets of anchovies, stoned black olives and sausages, add salt and plenty of pepper. Seal with the second loop and put in the oven for 40 minutes at 180°.

## CALATABIANO

The imposing and impregnable walls of the Castle of Calatabiano protect the eastern entrance of the Alcantara valley, whose name comes from the Arab Al qantar, "the bridge", and shows the boundary between the provinces of Catania and Messina.

Calatabiano has always been largely rural. Plenty of medlars thrive here.

*Vaniglia* (vanilla) and nespolone are the best varieties. The Calatabiano medlar trees seem to contain the colour and the sweetness of the sun.

They are picked by the end of the autumn and stored amidst the straw to render them sweet and juicy. They are used to prepare excellent jams, medlar ice creams and homemade liqueurs, among which *nespolino* (medlar liqueur) is particularly worth tasting.

In August, the quintain, the tournament of the Wild Boar and the joust of the Ring represent an authentic plunge in the medieval past of Calatabiano.

An opportunity to taste and rediscover the ancient flavors of Calatabiano: wine, extra-virgin olive oil, fruit liqueurs, fresh *ricotta* and local cheese.

## Medlar liquor

Infuse 160 gr. medlar stones in 1 lt. ethyl alcohol (95°). Steep for at least 30 days. Prepare a sugar syrup boiling 1 lt. water with 800 gr. refined sugar. Cool and add to the medlar infuse. Drink iced.

## RIPOSTO

The town of Riposto originates its name from the warehouses (*u ripostu*) where goods and barrels to be shipped were stored. The inhabitants have developed an intimate relationship with the sea, essential means of subsistence and nerve centre of merchants, fishers, shipowners, brokers, *bordonari* (mule or donkey owners who carried wheat and broad beans) and sailors.

The traditional cuisine of Riposto is well-known for its fish-fry and for the *albacore*, a prized white meat tuna fish caught with the fishing boats in the open waters of the coast. *Masculini* (anchovies), sea-bass, squids, shrimps are cooked in a wide-ranging way to satisfy even the finest palates – grilled, with an onion sauce, fried, in tinfoil or marinade.

The typical summer beverage in Riposto is *u cor i cari* (dog's heart), a mixture of water, lemon *granita* and mint syrup

## MASCALI

The land of Mascali, on the slopes of Mt. Etna, is a huge lava rock plain overlooking the sea, dotted with millstones, where the grapes were pressed and the wine was put down into big chestnut barrels. People have been growing grapes for not least than four centuries, from their bunches the valuable and renowned *Niuriddu mascalisi* (*Nerello mascalese* wine) is produced. Cereals, citrus fruits and almonds thrive as well. A local agricultural produce is the *fagiolino mascalese* (Mascali string beans), only grown in the area of Mascali and its surroundings. They sprout with mid July and are harvested by the end of August.

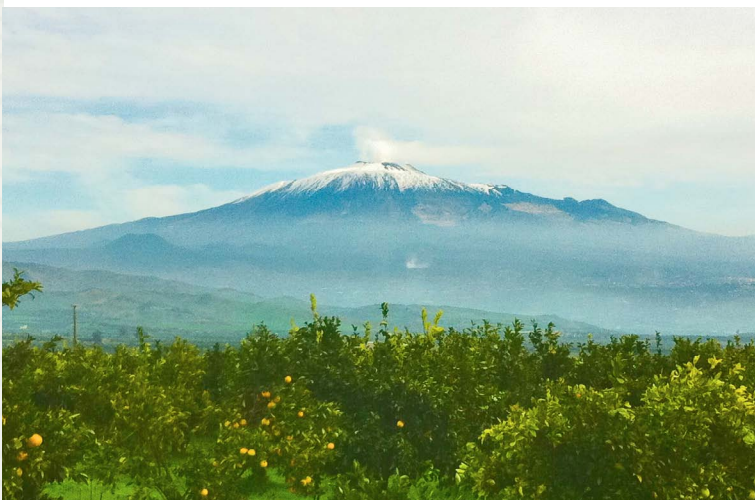
### String beans with garlic and tomato

Blanch the greens in boiling water. When they are "*al dente*" (hard to the bite), drain them and sauté in a pan with extra virgin olive oil and two crushed garlic cloves. Season and moisten with tomato purée. Dress with salt and black pepper and sprinkle with grated Sicilian *pecorino* cheese.

# FOOTHILLS OF ETNA

An estate on the slopes of Etna

Circumnavigating the volcano, we go through the twenty Commune that form the Parco dell'Etna (Etna Reserve). A delicious mixture of tastes ranging from the apples of Pedara to the mushrooms of Nicolosi, the sausages of Linguaglossa, the honey of Zafferana Etnea, the *torroncini* (small almond nougats) of Belpasso, the strawberries of Maletto, the pistachios of Bronte, the vegetables of Adrano, the oil of Ragalna and the black pork salami of Maniace. In addition, plenty of quality wine coming from the superb vineyards of Sant'Alfio, Castiglione di Sicilia, Milo, Viagrande, Randazzo, Linguaglossa.



## CASTIGLIONE DI SICILIA

Castiglione lies on a rocky hill within Mount Etna and Alcantara Gorge Natural Park, among chestnut, oak and genista woods. An enchanting scenery made of hazel groves, orange orchards and vineyards. In Springtime, the landscape becomes a triumph of colours, from the blossoming almonds to the orange ones. The economy of Castiglione is based upon agriculture, mainly hazelnuts and grapes. Numerous are the vineyards and the cellars producing and exporting quality DOC wines so much so that the town of Castiglione has deserved the name of Wine Town. Among the most prestigious grape vines we can remember *Nerello Mascalese*, *Carricante*, Merlot, *Frappato*, *Nero d'Avola* and *Catarratto*. Among the culinary specialities worth tasting we can include *maccu* (mashed broadbeans), macaroni with pork ragout and baked *ricotta*, nettle *tagghiarini* (flat spaghetti), *cuddured-di* with honey and hazelnuts and *ricotta* pancakes here called *sciàuni*.

## “Sciauni” or Fresh Ricotta Pancakes

INGREDIENTS FOR THE DOUGH: 500 gr. wheat flour, ½ glass olive oil, ½ glass red wine, 50 gr. honey, water to knead as much as needed, a pinch of salt.

INGREDIENTS FOR THE STUFFING: 400 gr. fresh *ricotta*, powdered cinnamon, 50 gr. honey, abundant oil to fry, grated orange rind, 100 gr. diced candied fruit, tangerine liqueur.

Knead the dough and leave to rest for at least ½ hour. Separately prepare the stuffing with the fresh *ricotta*. Roll out the dough using the rolling pin and get round discs out of it. On each half of them lay a spoonful of the *ricotta* stuffing, wet the rim with a little water, seal them half-moon shape and fry. Sprinkle with white or icing sugar.

## LINGUAGLOSSA

In Linguaglossa the Baroque buildings seem to make fun of the visitors with their black lava stone masks while old Liberty palaces peep into the nice main streets overshadowed by the volcano. In past times, the snow from Etna was stored during the winter and became a profit in the summer for the local inhabitants who sold it under the form of ice blocks in Catania for the preparation of the *granite* (water ice).

The economy of Linguaglossa has always been tied to the wine production. Hazelnuts are excellent as well, pride and joy of the area.



The sausages here are prepared following the ancient method using pork meat and lard together. The meat is then processed on an oak wooden chopping board and flavoured with black pepper, salt and wild fennel seeds coming from *terri forti* (strong soils).

In Linguaglossa there are also excellent pastries. Particularly winning are hazelnut and pistachio pastries and the typical *mustazzoli* (Honey biscuits).

## Falsomagro (stuffed meat roll)

INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4): 600 gr. flank steak, 2 hard boiled eggs, 50 gr. fresh *pecorino* cheese, 50 gr. ham or *mortadella*, fresh parsley, salt, pepper.

Roll out the flank pounded steak, lay slices of ham or *mortadella* over the meat, lay the eggs and sprinkle with chopped parsley and diced cheese. Salt and pepper. Roll the flank steak up around the stuffing and tie with butcher's twine. Put a few tablespoonful oil in a pan and sear the meat on all sides. Remove the meat from the pan, add the onion and sauté together with a bay leaf. Return the meat to the pan. Sprinkle with red wine and cook until evaporated. Add some tomato sauce and simmer the meat roll for about an hour, covered. Let rest, cut off the strings and slice. Serve with its sauce.



## PIEDIMONTE ETNEO

Land of beech, pine, oak and chestnut trees. Dagale are scattered here and there, green islands amidst a sea of lava flow. They are given over to orchards, vineries and olive-yards, while pistachio trees and prickly pears cling into the rocks. Bordering Fiumefreddo, we find rich crops of citrus fruits - oranges, tangerines, clementines and lemons, grown on skillfully terraced lands. Piedimonte produces excellent D.O.C. wines. The grape vines grown here are *Carricante* and *Nerello Cappuccio*, while the orchards offer best quality apples, pears (worth mentioning is *pera coscia* – a variety of pear), peaches and cherries.

## SANT'ALFIO

A stage of rare beauty from which to admire the Mediterranean undergrowth on one side and the lava desert on the other. Sant'Alfio is one of the most renowned towns for the production of nuts, chestnuts, wine grapes and apple crops. The local pastry is famous for its delicious almond, pistachio and hazelnut cakes. There is also a best quality honey

production. Two varieties - eucalyptus and buddy orange - are particularly palatable. The woods are rich in mushrooms, used in many dishes of the local kitchen. Animal breeding (horses and goats) are steadily developing. Excellent cheese is produced from local milk.

## Zeppole di riso (Rice cakes)

INGREDIENTS: 250 gr. 00 flour, 250 gr. Rice, 500 mL, water, a pinch of salt and sugar, 20 gr. brewer's yeast, grated orange rind. INGREDIENTS FOR THE SYRUP: 250 gr. Etna honey, 250 mL water, cinnamon, icing sugar to sprinkle



Bring water and milk to the boil, pour in the rice and cook for at least 17 mins. When it is firm enough, leave to cool. Add a pinch of salt and refined sugar. Add the sieved flour combined with the grated orange rind and the yeast dissolved in a very small amount of water. Set aside to raise, then make fingers out of the rice and fry them. Get water, honey and cinnamon and prepare the syrup to drizzle over the rice fingers. Sprinkle with icing sugar.

## MILO

Kissed by the snow in winter, Milo becomes a fresh manor in the summer. Over the times eruptions have covered woods, vineries and old cottages. The volcanic nature of the soil favours the production of wine, chestnuts, hazelnuts, mushrooms, grapes, fruits (apples first) and vegetables. The local cuisine is made of *parmigiana* (an aubergine based dish), battered



vegetables, *caponata* (an aubergine and pepper based dish), grilled or stuffed peppers. Very peculiar is the cooked bread, made from stale bread, onion, cherry tomatoes and chopped parsley. Homemade bread, naturally risen and baked in wood-fire ovens, is also very much appreciated. Fruit tarts, *semifreddo* (a cold dessert), *cassata* (fresh ricotta cakes) and *rosolio* (sweet liqueurs made from fruits, spices or herbs) will delight your palate at the end of the meal.

### Cooked bread (an example of traditional poor cooking)

250 gr. stale bread soaked in lukewarm water and thoroughly pressed, seasoned with 100 gr. red ripe *Perino* tomatoes, 100 gr. red onion rings, chopped parsley drizzled all over together with 100 gr. extra virgin olive oil, table salt and a handful of freshly ground black pepper.

## ZAFFERANA ETNEA



On the Eastern slopes of Etna lies Zafferana, the pearl of Etna. Its name originates from the Arab *Zafaran* (yellow) and reminds us of the local Spanish broom and the saffron.

The strong points of the local economy are sheep-rearing, wine and beekeeping. Honey, the gold of Etna, is the main source of income. The

*lapari* (beekeepers) in Zafferana produce *millefiori* (poly-floral honey), orange blossom, eucalyptol and chestnut honey; honey is very much used to prepare cakes and typical dishes. Zafferana is also a land of oil, apples, mushrooms and chestnuts. The specialities are *foglie da tè* (Tea biscuits), thin layers made with pistachio, almonds, hazelnuts; *Sciatori* (skiers) chocolate coated biscuits, *pizza 'a siciliana* (Sicilian style pizza), a half-circled closed pizza filled with tuma cheese or fresh peppered cheese, anchovies and black pepper and then fried.

### Sciatori, biscotti 'ca liffia (Skiers)

INGREDIENTS: 1 kg flour OO, 300 gr sugar, 150 gr butter, 400 ml milk, 4 eggs, orange essence, 1 pinch salt, vanillin, 25 gr.



brewer's yeast, plain chocolate for the coating.

Combine all the ingredients but the chocolate. Make small s-shaped biscuits out of the dough,

lay them on a baking sheet and let them rest. Bake in the oven at 200° for 15 mins. When the biscuits are ready, dunk them in melted chocolate and cool.

## S. VENERINA

Santa Venerina enjoyed a conspicuous economic and demographic boom towards 1850 with the numerous distilleries which opened in that area and with its rich wine production. The specialities of the place are pork shin, fried tuma and *ricotta* cheese, homemade pasta, like *casarecce al pistacchio* (fresh pasta with a pistachio seasoning), battered vegetables, second course dishes based on meat, game and Porcino mushrooms. The local distilleries produce excellent alcoholic beverages made from herbs or fruits, such as *limoncello* (lemon liqueur), *fragolino* (strawberry liqueur) and *arancello* (orange liqueur).

### Fried Tuma Cheese

**INGREDIENTS:** 400 gr tuma cheese, 40 gr. Salted anchovies, 200 gr. Semolina (to dust), Olive oil to fry.

Cut a slit in the centre of each slice of cheese so that it forms a pocket, place an anchovy inside and close the open parts. Flour and fry the cheese in a pan with hot oil.

## VIAGRANDE

Viagrande takes its name after *via Regia (Va ranni)*, an old road connecting Catania to Messina. In ancient times chestnut barrels full of wine were conveyed there by *carramatti* (mule drawn carts). Past memories are linked to the land and its products, like prickly pears, cherries and extra-virgin olive oil processed in the local millstones. One of the most renowned historical cafés that have long existed in Viagrande has given birth to the famous *Siciliana*, a kind of fried turnover stuffed with *tuma* (sheep cheese), anchovies and black olives. Another showpiece is the *Spumone*, a parfait with assorted flavours. Moreover the gastronomy offers real delicatessen such as *crispelle alla ricotta* or *alle acciughe* (kind of battered doughnuts stuffed with fresh *ricotta* or anchovies).

### Siciliana

**Ingredients:** Semolina mixed with 00 flour gr. 500, brewer's yeast gr. 15, table salt, warm water

**Stuffing:** Fresh *tuma* (sheep cheese) gr. 300, stoned black olives gr. 150, anchovies in oil gr. 30, abundant oil to fry.

Knead the ingredients until you obtain a soft and even dough. Leave

to rise then roll out with the rolling pin making thin round layers out of it. Place *tuma*, some olives and a fillet of anchovy on each half of them. Fold them half-moon- shape. Fry in plenty of oil



## NICOLOSI

Land of strong tastes and odours. Among the specialities worth tasting we remember *provola* (a DOP Sicilian cheese), cold cuts, fresh sheep *ricotta*, mushrooms, sun dried tomatoes, red orange salads - dressed with extravirgin olive oil, toasted pinenuts and fresh spring onion - fresh broad beans seasoned with salted *ricotta* and mint, *maccu 'cca pasta frittu* (fried broad bean macco and pasta), *risotto* (rice) with *ferula* mushrooms, small veal balls cooked on lemon leaves, *scacciata* with *broccoli*. Sweets to finish with, such as lemon or almond *gelo* (jelly), pistachio or lemon cake.

### Funci 'ncartati (Mushrooms in foil)

INGREDIENTS: Mushrooms gr. 500, breadcrumbs gr. 50, grated *pecorino* cheese (sheep cheese) gr. 50, 1 anchovy, parsle, chopped garlic, lemon, olive oil, salt and pepper.

Clean the mushrooms, chop a garlic clove, the parsley and the anchovy. Add the breadcrumbs, the *pecorino* cheese, some lemon juice, salt and pepper. Season with some extra-virgin olive oil. Coat the mushrooms in the mixture obtained, place them in a cooking foil, close and bake in hot oven for 25 mins. least.

## RAGALNA

The cherry trees mellow the rugged lava stone terraces. The *fungiaro* (mushroom picker) picks up ferula mushrooms in the thick woods with his basket (*u panaru*). Today like yesterday it is easy to come upon people bent to collect vegetables (*fari viddura*) in the country. A best quality D.O.P. extravirgin olive oil is also produced. Here an ancient rural culture survives, which makes use of the wild asparagus and loads of country vegetables like *cosci i vecchia* (old woman's thighs, *costolina*, a local vegetable) and *caliceddi* (cavolicello, another local vegetable). They are generally sautéed with garlic and red pepper as a side dish to grilled sausages.

### Coniglio di "sciara" alle olive e pera spina (Lava rock wild rabbit with olives and 'spinella' pears)

INGREDIENTS (SERVES 4): 1 kg wild rabbit, 150 gr .green olives, 400 gr 'spinella' pears, 100 mL white wine, 80 mL extra virgin olive oil, 200 gr onion, 1 clove garlic, 100 gr celery, 100 gr carrots, 2 bay leaves, salt and pepper

Sear the floured rabbit with some oil in a pan, sprinkle with wine, burn off, season with salt and pepper. Separately brown onion, garlic, celery and carrots with a little oil. Add the rabbit. Top up with vegetable stock. When it is almost ready, add the stoned olives and the chopped pears. Finish cooking

## S. MARIA DI LICODIA

The land is given over to plenty of olive, almond and fruit trees. The cattle rearing is particularly flourishing.

The gastronomy is made of genuine foods and rich spices. It is noted for the so-called *ragù finto* (fake ragout) made from tomato concentrate and potatoes, the omelette with wild vegetables, the soup with bread and *cicerchia* (a kind of pulse), the fried pumpkin, the homemade jams.

### Cotognata

INGREDIENTS: Quinces kg 1.3, castor sugar kg 1, 2 lemons

Peel the apples, cut them into four, remove the seeds and dip into water acidulated with lemon juice. Transfer them in a pot, cover with cold water and lemon rind. Boil on a low fire until cooked. Drain, sieve and collect the purée obtained. It should roughly weigh one kg. Pour the purée in a pot with the same quantity of sugar and half lemon juice. Set on the fire and cook until you get a very dry mixture. Discard the lemon rind and transfer the "cotognata" in its special earthenware small moulds.

## BIANCAVILLA

The land of Biancavilla is particularly rich in potassium, a very important element for the garden market; moreover its territory swarms with water springs and enjoys a mild climate all year round. That's why this country has peculiarly been devoted to organic agricultural systems. There are plenty of grasslands, fodder and hay, which allow cattle breeding, sheep and goat rearing to be flourishing.

There are very good sweet almond crops, DOP *novellara* olives from Etna, *ficurinia* – prickly pears – and *fioroni* – obtained by the second prickly pear blossoms, quality red oranges, *tarocco* (an orange variety) and many other fruits and vegetables. An excellent quality of extra virgin olive oil is obtained from the old olive presses and millstones of the area. The vineyards produce good table wines like the valuable *Etna Rosso* (Etna Red).



Among the culinary specialities of the area we can remember *scacciate con tuma* (stuffed pies with tuma cheese), plenty of wild herbs cooked in thousands of ways, *alivi cunzati* (olives seasoned with garlic and oregano), excellent *parmigiana* (aubergine pies).

You are also spoilt for choice of pastries – soft hazelnut nougats, *scumuni* (a soft ice cream made with whipped cream), ice creams, biscuits, *iris* (breadcrumbsed and fried pastries filled with custard or chocolate cream), almond pastries.

## BRONTE



On the hard lava stone soil the farmers have planted pistachio trees that grow strong and lush. Pistachio is the main income of the land. Excellent are also peaches and apricots, cultivated along the fertile Simeto valley. Among the dairy farming pecorino and *ricotta* stand out for their genuine

and traditional taste. People from Bronte love the *sparacogni*, a vegetable similar to asparagus found growing in the woods and in the *sciare* (lava rock grounds) among the pistachio trees (called Lochi). The rural culture has turned its slightly bitterish taste in delicious dishes – fried or as a pasta seasoning, as an accompaniment to the eggs, as a side dish or in the traditional omelettes.

The local sweets are rich in recipes whose main ingredient is pistachio, like *mammurati*, *cosaruci*, ('sweet things') - made from a mixture of almonds and /or pistachio, white of eggs and sugar, heart shaped, topped with a white icing dotted with *javulicchi* (hundreds and thousands) and baked in the oven.

## MALETTO



Its land abounds with old vineyards and evergreen strawberry beds offering the most typical and renowned produce of the area: the strawberry of Maletto. There is also a flourishing animal breeding (cattle, sheep, pigs) and as a result there are excellent cheeses and *ricotta*. Therefore the

rural tourism can enjoy an incredibly wide gastronomic offer: baked or grilled lamb and hog, *tagliatelle* (flat noodles) with *ferra* mushrooms (*pleurotus ferulae*), local pork sausage – plain or flavoured with cherry tomatoes and cheese, wild asparagus omelettes, strawberry *risotto* (rice), fresh *pappardelle* (homemade flat noodles) flavoured with porcino mushrooms, macaroni with wild rabbit sauce, fruits and vegetables.

### Strawberry salad

**INGREDIENTS:** 400 gr. strawberries, 1 small bunch garden rocket, 1 small bunch dandelion greens, 200 gr. goat cheese, salt, extra virgin olive oil, pink pepper.

Clean, and chop the strawberries. Wash the garden rocket and the dandelion greens, dice the goat cheese. Mix and dress with extra virgin olive oil, and salt. Garnish with pink pepper.

## RANDAZZO

Land of birch and chestnut trees, foxes, hedgehogs and wild rabbits. The local gastronomy is based on mushrooms, cold cuts and meats coming both from Mount Etna and from the Nebrodi Mountains. The recipes are a combination of *aetneous* gastronomic traditions: grilled *ferra* Mushrooms (*pleurotus ferulae*), *carpaccio di porcini ovuli* (thin slices of raw mushrooms dressed with olive oil, lemon and Parmesan), grilled *provola*



of the Nebrodi with sautéed mushrooms, fresh or baked ricotta and local vegetables. Among the sweets particular mention must be made of *occhi di bozze* (hazelnut biscuits), *pignolata*, *marmorata*, *tirimulluri*, *mostarda*.

### Tirimulluri

Ingredients: 1 lt. mulled wine, 300 gr. 000 flour, 350 gr. hazelnuts and walnuts – baked and roughly crushed, a pinch of cinnamon.

Bring the mulled wine to the boil, sprinkle the flour in. Stir up and mix well. Add the hazelnuts and the walnuts always cooking on a low fire until you get a thick mixture. Switch off and flavor with the cinnamon. Leave to cool. Grease your hands with some oil, take the dough and reduce it to small sticks. Flatten them on the edge of a basket to obtain their peculiar form. Place on a buttered or oiled baking tin. Cook in the oven at low temperature (170°) for at least 25 minutes.



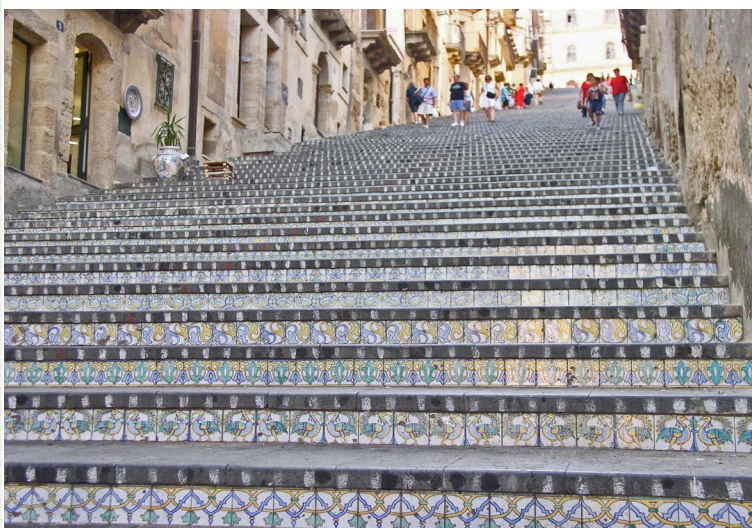


# THE COUNTY OF CALTAGIRONE

The County of Caltagirone, called *Calatino*, lies between the Erei and the Iblei Mountains, bathed by the river Simeto in the North, and presents a great historical and culinary value.

Here a deep-rooted tradition rules, made of typical dishes showing the thousand and one aspects of those people who have followed on from one another each leaving a piece which has formed an incredible culinary jigsaw. A perfect harmony between nature, tradition and the finest products. A dance of poor but genuine dishes which mingle with the sumptuous ones prepared in the kitchens of the Sicilian noble families, thanks to the extraordinary generosity of the soil.

## CALTAGIRONE



The typical cuisine of Caltagirone is the result of a society that throughout the centuries has always been divided into two classes: a rich one, noble and well educated, and another one made of poor farm workers.

The poor dishes maintain a strong tie with the fruits of the earth. A very popular one is *u maccu* (mashed broad beans). Aristophanes maintained that Heracle used to achieve incredible loving performances just thanks to this purée. Prepared on St. Joseph's Day, it was accompanied by other pulses such as peas, chickpeas, beans and lentils and by vegetables like borage, wild fennel, dried tomatoes and onion.

It used to be the farm-workers' main dish. Their masters gave them only

one bowl of *maccu* for the whole day - they were given pasta only at threshing time.

The rich cuisine has strongly been affected by the various dominations. This is particularly evident in the pastries with Arab and French influence. Sweets based upon *ricotta* cheese like *cassata*, *cannoli* and *collorelle* are a great pride. The sheep farming and the consequent availability of milk favours the production of excellent *ricotta* cheese and dairy products, such as *tuma*, *primo sale* (sheep milk cheese at an early stage of maturation), *pecorino* cheese and salted *ricotta* cheese. There is also a very good production of fruit, like the peaches of Piano San Paolo, grapes and red oranges. Another important quality product is the extra-virgin olive oil.

Typical dishes are *i vaccareddi* (snails), *i favi nuveddi* (fresh broad beans), *i piruni*, *a cocuzza ru 'nvernu* (the winter courgette – pumpkin), *a frittata ri sparici* (omelette with asparagus).

### Collorelle

**INGREDIENTS:** honey, roasted almonds, flour 00, cloves, eggs, suet, lemon rind.

For the filling: bring the honey to the boiling then add the roasted almonds and one third of the flour. Place them on a container and leave to stand.

For the dough: mix the remaining flour with the yolks and the suet. Roll out the mixture with a rolling pin until you obtain a very thin layer, cut it into subtle stripes, place some filling on each of them, roll up and bake for 20 minutes on a moderate temperature (180°).

## CASTEL DI IUDICA

One of the most traditional dishes in Castel di Iudica is the *cuccia*. It's based upon boiled wheat and its origin can be traced back to the Arabs. According to the tradition, after a long lasting famine a loading of wheat miraculously appeared. It was assaulted by the starving people who immediately cooked and ate it.

The *cuccia* is often prepared - sweetened with honey or cooked must and sometimes with fresh *ricotta* cheese. Sharing it with relatives and neighbours is considered a good omen. People used to offer it to the poor when a close relative died.

The typical dishes of Castel di Iudica are hot and cold *mostarda*, homemade macaroni seasoned with a prickly pear sauce, *cannoli* stuffed with a prickly pear based custard. Typical products: citrus fruits, Sicilian Red Oranges IGP, olive crops, cereals.

## Cuccia

INGREDIENTS: 500 gr wheat, 120 gr. Starch, 1 and ½ lt. Milk, 200 gr. Sugar, powdered cinnamon, bay leaves.

Soak the wheat with cold water in a bowl for three days. After that drain and put it in a pot with cold water and some bay leaves. Simmer for at least a couple of hours. Season with refined sugar and powdered cinnamon.



## LICODIA EUBEA

In the Middle Ages, Licodia was called little Palermo for the high number of aristocrats living there and the richness of its land. The local recipes based upon pulses are quite old – Santa Pau's beans, the chick peas *Buriana* style and the Capuchins' lentils are all medieval dishes that is possible to taste during the *patacò* Festival. *Patacò* is a flour obtained from the milling of a leguminous plant: the grass pea. Its use in the area of Licodia can be traced back to the Roman "Puls" (a sort of pulse porridge). Under the Roman Empire Sicily absorbed Rome's customs and uses as well as its eating habits.

There is a flourishing cattle, sheep, goat and horse rearing as well as an excellent production of typical Sicilian cheese.

## "Patacò"

INGREDIENTS: grass pea flour, sprouting *broccoli*, sausage, red hot chili pepper, garlic, oil, salt.

Brown the garlic finely chopped, add the crumbed sausage, the red hot chili pepper and sauté. Add the sprouting *broccoli* previously boiled in salted water, stir for a couple of minutes mixing in the cooking water of the *broccoli*. Just before the water boils, start stirring and pouring in the flour at the same time. As soon as the mixture reaches the desired density, season with oil and serve.

In Licodia the *pagnuccata* is traditionally prepared during the cold months and particularly at Christmas, Easter and at Carnival time. This typical cake was considered the poor's *torrone* (nougat) because it looked like *torrone* but without almonds which were definitely too expensive.

## Pagnuccata

INGREDIENTS: Flour 400 gr, 4 Eggs, Lard 80 gr, Honey 300 gr, Sugar 2 spoonful, oil.

Combine the lard with the flour, the sugar and the eggs, make 1 cm. diameter sticks out of the mixture and cut them into small pieces. Fry them a little at a time in plenty of oil, dry and coat them with the melted honey.

## GRAMMICHELE



Around the year 827 the Arabs conquered Sicily. They brought an extremely refined culinary culture which very soon became heritage and pride of the Island. Ingredients like sugar, almonds, citrus fruit and cinnamon represented a unique revolution in the Sicilian dietary habits. The

*cuddureddi i meli*, ancient sweets dating back to XV century, are typical of Grammichele. They are prepared at Christmas time and present a round or 's' shape. Sweets often have geometrical and symbolic forms. The circle, for example, is a male symbol of completeness and eternity.

The "S" shape represents the snake.

The main religious festivals are linked to food and in particular to sweets: the *cuccia* on St. Lucia's Day; the *sfinj* on St. Joseph's Day; the *aceddu 'cu lova* (\*) and the *cassateddi* filled with *ricotta* cheese at Easter; the blessed bread for the Feast of Saint Anthony of Padova and on the occasion of St. Archangel's pilgrimage; the watermelon on St. Rocco's Day; the sausages to celebrate the Lady of the *Piano*.

Other typical foods and sweets, some of which with fanciful names, used in various festivals are *testi di turcu* (Turkish heads), *tumai* stuffed with *ricotta* cheese, *piduna* based upon spinach, *cudduri* and *cucciddati* filled with the typical products of the earth: almonds, dry figs, walnuts, candied fruit, orange peel, *cucuzzata*.

And let's not forget the sausages of Grammichele! The organically raised pigs supply such a quality meat that makes sausages an excellent product. Grilled on the charcoal, in the squares crowded with people they are eaten and tasted hot. And a second typical dish is the fried tripe.

(\*) - The *aceddu 'cu lova* is a typical Easter cake which is traditionally dove-shaped and has a changeable number of unshelled eggs set in its core.

## Cuddureddi

INGREDIENTS: 500 gr flour 00, 500 gr semolina, 350 gr sugar, 2 eggs, 200 gr lard, 1 bag powdered yeast, 1 bag vanillin, a pinch of cinnamon, 1 lemon- grated and squeezed, 1 pinch ammonia, milk as needed

Filling: ½ lt mulled wine, spices (cloves, cinnamon powder, vanilla), 400 g. peeled chopped almonds, 200 g. orange candied peel.

Mix the two flours forming a pyramid and in the middle place the sugar, the eggs, the lard, the powdered yeast, the cinnamon, a pinch of ammonium bicarbonate and the grated lemon. Knead the dough adding the milk a little at a time until you get the desired consistency. Let stand in the fridge for 10 mins. Cut the dough into chunks and roll out with the rolling pin, slice into strips large enough to contain the stuffing, place the filling and roll. Grease a baking dish, lay the 'cuddureddi' and bake for 20 minutes at 150°

## MILITELLO IN VAL DI CATANIA

The cuisine of Militello favors cakes with almonds or mulled wine. The most typical ones are the *cassatiddine* or aunt nun's cakes, short pastry sweets topped up with a glacé icing which were once prepared in St. Agatha's nunnery. At Christmas authentic sweet delicacies are prepared, like *mastrazzola* and *infasciateddi*; on St. Lucia and St. Joseph's Days the *cuccia* made with boiled wheat and the *pipirata* made with rice are a must.

### Pipirata

**INGREDIENTS:** Prickly pear mulled wine, pine nuts, rice, cloves.

Prepare the "prickly pear mulled wine" bringing the prickly pear juice to the boiling. You will have to cook it slowly and for a long time so to obtain a very concentrated syrup. Add the cloves. Boil the rice separately, drain it and stir in the mulled wine. Put it again on the fire. Add the pine nuts. When it is well cooked and thickened, serve with a sprinkle of dark cocoa powder and cinnamon.

## MINEO

Mineo stands out for its rich production of citrus fruit, wine grapes, almonds, wheat, prickly pears and for its excellent extra virgin olive oil that visitors can taste on the occasion of the Olive Oil Festival held in December. Processed by the olive presses following the traditional basic method, it is used to flavor innumerable dishes among which we can remember the pulses with pork rinds and the vegetables. Excellent sheep, cattle and pig breeding can be found in its farms. Lambs, yearlings, wild rabbits, home raised hens are delicious. In some granges of the area which keep unchanged the charm of the country, you can still taste fresh *ricotta*, just made and piping hot.

The most famous dishes of the area are no doubt the *cavatieddi*, a shape of pasta seasoned with tomato sauce, aubergines and salted *ricotta* cheese, and the homemade pasta with wild fennels. The most traditional sweets are the so called *sfinci*.

### Sfinci

**INGREDIENTS:** 1 kg durum wheat, 20 gr. Soda, sugar, warm water as needed, powdered cinnamon, oil to fry, vanillin, salt.

Place the flour like a fountain, in the well put the soda previously melt in very little warm water with a pinch of sugar, add slightly salted warm water a little at a time and knead beating the dough

hard with your palm, until it becomes soft. Cover with a cloth and leave to rise for some hours. Fry spoonful of the mixture in plenty of hot oil. Season with sugar or honey and cinnamon.

## MAZZARRONE



The name Mazzarrone has an interesting Greek etymology which is strongly linked to the food culture: Maz, ear of wheat, and aron or arun, wheat, i.e. earth rich in wheat.

An ancient use that has been passed down from parents to children is St. Joseph's dinner, prepared as a vow taken for grace received. Three people representing the Holy Family are invited to dine and the most typical dishes are prepared for the event. The worship of traditions, the preservation of authenticity and the desire to

improve the quality of the grapes have made Mazzarrone great for the production of table grapes. For this reason grapes, local wines, mustard and all the typical cakes prepared with mulled wine are sovereign there.

### Mulled wine

Pour some red wine must in a pot, put it on the fire and as soon as it starts boiling turn the flame down. Cook stirring without stopping until the initial liquid is reduced to a third. Leave to cool, then bottle the syrup, cork carefully and store. The addition of carob and ash obtained by the grapes wood will render its taste unique.

## MIRABELLA IMBACCARI

A land dedicated to agriculture ever since. All the populations who have lived there have come under the spell of the myths and the cult linked to the produce cycles.

For St. Joseph's Day altars are laid for a sumptuous repast - big tables covered up with dishes aimed at amazing the guests with their abundance and richness. Ritual banquets as a votive offering.

The bread becomes a symbol of devotion and is offered to those who honour the altar. On this occasion particular forms of bread are distributed, *pagnoccu, cuddura and gaddu*.

## PALAGONIA

This little town is famous for its production of red oranges – the red gold of Palagonia. Anywhere you look at, the hills (*la Piana*) are covered with plenty of juicy and fragrant red orange trees.

In Palagonia, as well as in Castel di Iudica, people prepare the *cuccia*. It is the traditional dish prepared on 13 December for St. Lucia's Day.

### Orange Marmalade



**INGREDIENTS:** 500 gr organic oranges, 500 gr sugar.

Soak the oranges for 3 days, changing their water every night. After that, cube the oranges without peeling them. Add the sugar and cook on a slow fire stirring until it thickens, stirring frequently. Turn off the heat and put in jars.



## RADDUSA

Raddusa, land of abundant vegetation, from the Arab Rabdusa . In old times this land has deserved the name of Eastern Sicily's granary for its consistent production of wheat.

Selection and toil have made it a product of excellence in Sicily. The wheat from Raddusa belongs to the niche products which are part of the Off the beaten tasting path. An excellent bread is made out of it. A typical preparation is *u brusciareddu*, durum wheat grilled on charcoal.

Worth tasting is the *cuccia*, often seasoned with wild fennel.

In March for St. Joseph's Day people set votive altars and on that event participants are served St. Joseph's soup, based upon pulses and home-made pasta. Following the ancient tradition, it is prepared in a capacious *quadara* (pot) and distributed in dishes or pots brought by the guests from their own houses.

Raddusa is also home to excellent cheese such as *pecorino* (sheep cheese), which is perhaps the oldest cheese made in Sicily: its origins date back to the IX century b.C. A typical preparation based upon cheese is the *carrubella*.

## SAN CONO



The little village of San Cono, Land of the Prickly Pear, lies at the foot of Mount San Marco, South of Mounts Erei. Hernan Cortés brought the prickly pear to Europe in the XV century and in Sicily it was initially used to give an exotic aspect to the noble palaces.

An old proverb says: *Jinchi la panza e jinchila ri spini* (fill up your stomach and fill it up with thorns), maybe to justify the fact that the skin was eaten as well, coated in breadcrumbs and fried.

Besides eating it fresh, the prickly pear is processed in various ways: juices, liqueurs, jellies, jams and ice creams. The leaves can be eaten as well - fresh, pickled or candied. The skin, carefully cleared of its thorns, is often prepared in cutlets. The farmers use it as forage.

In folk medicine, applying the pulp directly on the wounds represents an excellent anti-inflammatory cure. Tea made from its flowers has diuretic properties. The fruit is considered astringent for its high content of vitamin C.

## Masticutti

INGREDIENTS: Prickly pears from which to obtain a liter of liquid, 100 gr. corn starch, 100 gr. almonds and walnuts, 100 gr.

powdered cinnamon, orange and tangerine grated rind  
Chop the prickly pears and cook them in a pot together with their skin for about 15/20 minutes. Sieve and transfer the liquid obtained in a bowl where you will add the starch a little at a time stirring non-stop until it thickens. Flavour with the cinnamon, the grated rind of the citrus fruits and the dry fruit roughly chopped.

Take some pottery bowls, wet them with a little water and pour in the mixture obtained. Leave to rest for a couple of hours then parch in the sun.

P.S. – The pottery bowls were traditionally used in Sicily to contain jam, mustard or quince jam.

## RAMACCA

The landscape of Ramacca is embellished by splendid granges scattered



all over the land: real works of art referring to rural architecture. It's a land of artichokes, where a very good variety is grown - the violet one. Its cultivation is more than one thousand years old, going back to the Arabs who called them Kharshuf between the IX and X century.

This plant is a real generous one - you use everything of it: the flowers and the thistles, the fresh leaves and the dried ones for the cattle. At the end of the summer, when the fruits of the earth ripen, artichoke based

dishes are prepared and offered to the visitors in the squares dressed up for the festival. In Ramacca, as well as in many other parts of Sicily, wheat is the main produce. In the past, the local farmers created and selected a special variety of wheat, which was called *Margherito* after the name of the homonymous land. The bread made from this flour is famous all over the Eastern part of the Island.

In the local economy, sheep rearing is very important; cheese making is excellent – *u picurinu* (cheese made from the sheep) is worth mentioning.

### **Caponata di carciofi (Sweet and sour artichokes)**

**INGREDIENTS:** artichokes, carrots, medium size onions, stalks of celery, stoned white olives, 1/2 glass wine vinegar (or dry white wine), 1 ½ spoonful refined sugar, extra virgin olive oil. Slowly fry the chopped onions, carrots and celery in extra virgin olive oil. Add the stemmed artichoke hearts and the olives. Braise them. Sprinkle with the vinegar and the sugar and finish cooking. Season with salt and pepper.

### **Omelette with artichokes of Ramacca**

**INGREDIENTS:** 4 artichokes, 4 eggs, 40 gr. pecorino cheese, salt, olive oil, pepper.

Clean the artichokes, discard the hardest leaves and the fuzzy center, chop and braise them in good olive oil. Separately beat the egg yolks, add the cooked artichokes and some Sicilian *pecorino* cheese. Season with salt and pepper. Transfer to the pan again and finish cooking.

## **SAN MICHELE DI GANZARIA**

The old village of San Michele di Ganzaria dates back to the Arab age. It reached its full development during the Angevin period. The name comes after its Patron Saint's name with the addition of the Arabic word *Kanzir* which meant pig farm.

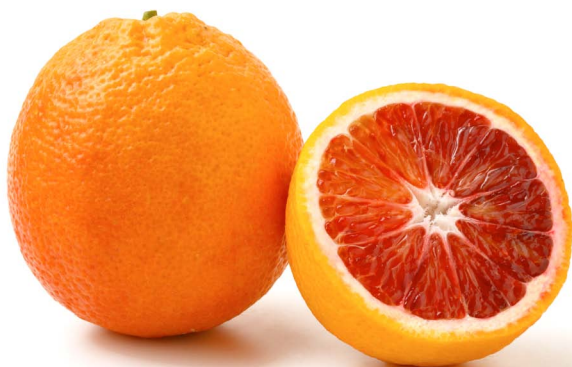
The village boasts rich crops of cereals, grapes, olives, fruit and citrus fruit not to mention a consistent sheep, goat, pig and cattle rearing. The fresh eggs are excellent.

Among the typical dishes we can remember: pasta with wild fennels and *muddicata* (stale breadcrumbs pan-fried with oil and anchovies), *chiutto*, a porridge made from the grass pea flour, *crastagneddu* (mutton), *pani che ficu*, bread with dry figs, homemade lasagna seasoned with rabbit sauce, *cutinedda*, pork rind

## The "curriulli" (wild battered thistles)

Cook the thistles in acidulated boiling water for some minutes. When they are ready, drain and dry them accurately. Prepare a batter with durum flour, water, a pinch of salt, three spoonful of grated pecorino cheese, chopped anchovy fillets. Coat the thistles with the batter. Fry in plenty of olive oil.

## SCORDIA



The town is one of the most important citrus fruit center in Sicily due to its great quality produces. In fact plenty of local farms have entered into the orange cultivation, mainly designated to the international trade.

There are various appetizing temptations in Scordia from the dried fruits to the jams and the dried prickly pears, which are characteristics of this area, to the cold cuts and *salami*, the cheese and the excellent pastry.

Among the traditional dishes of Scordia we must mention the *schacciata* (a typical Sicilian stuffed flat bread), the *gelatina* (sort of meaty gelatinous log), the roasted chickpeas, the *cuccidati*, the *pagnuccata*, the so-called *ossa di mortu* ("deads' bones") biscuits, the *mastazzola*, the orange salad.

The *schacciata* is a traditional recipe of the folk cuisine in the area of Catania. There are plenty of versions: the most typical one is prepared with black olives, anchovies and *tuma*, a local cheese. Other ingredients used for the stuffing are cauliflower, sausages and fresh peppered cheese.

## Orange salad

**INGREDIENTS:** red oranges, leek, stoned black olives, extra-virgin olive oil, salt and pepper

Slice the oranges, place them in a dish, add the rings of leek and

the olives. Season with extra-virgin olive oil, salt and pepper.

## VIZZINI



The speciality of Vizzini is by definition the fresh *ricotta* cheese. The farmers have selected excellent milk cattle and sheep races so much that the cheese production has reached excellent results. The cakes prepared with the local *ricotta* cheese are pretty renowned. This is the right place where you can be delighted with *cassata*, *cassatelle*, pastry

cakes, *ricotta* cheese ice cream, must mustard, *nucatola* (\*1), prickly pear mustard, cutumé, St. Joseph's pancakes, biscuits *giulebbati* (coated in sugar syrup), *giammelle* (\*2).

(\*1) – biscuits with a filling of almonds as main ingredients.

(\*2) – a biscuit half way between 'ladyfingers' and sponge cake, essentially made from eggs and flour.

### **"Cutumé" with fresh ricotta cheese.**

Take a "cavagna" (basket – 200 gr.) of *ricotta* cheese, add an egg, two spoonful sugar, two spoonful flour and a pinch of cinnamon. Fry spoonful of the mixture a little at a time. When the "cutumé" are ready, dip into the honey and sprinkle with cinnamon.

### **"Biscotti giulebbati" (Biscuits coated in sugar syrup)**

Knead one kg flour with 9 eggs and 6 spoonful olive oil until you get a thick dough. Cut it in small pieces and lay them on floured baking sheets. Make two cuts on each of them and bake. Separately prepare the sugar syrup (giulebbe) with water and sugar in a small pot. When the biscuits are ready, dip two or three of them at a time in the syrup and twirl until the syrup sticks on them.

## **CONCEPT**

Service Cultural Politics of Tourism and Sports,  
Province of Catania

## **GRAPHIC DESIGN**

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## **TEXT**

Calogero Matina

## **TRANSLATIONS**

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## **PHOTOS**

Paolo Sidoti: 7(I),7(II), 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 22, 24, 25(II), 27, 29, 30,  
32, 35, 41, 44, 45

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Pixabay: 23, 36, 39, 42

Agata Vitale: 8, 15, 21, 40

## **PRINT**

Tipografia TM S. Venerina



The warmth of the sun enhances the sweet smell of the land and mixes it with the scent of the Mediterranean Sea brought by the sea breeze. On Mount Etna as well as in the plains of Catania and Caltagirone it is a stream of intense fragrances and fast colors. The flavours of this generous land are marked and unique and they balance themselves between sea and land, providing two different ways of cooking.



PROVINCIA REGIONALE DI CATANIA



IP.S.S.A.R. "K.WOJTYLA" DI CATANIA