

THE RIETI CHESTNUT



ORIGIN OF THE NAME:

For some scholars, the etymology of the word chestnut (in Italian castagna) derives from the name of the city Kastania in Thessaly (Greece), while for others the name comes from Kastanis, a city in the Ponto region of Asian Turkey described by Pliny as an area with vast chestnut woods.

HISTORY:

Traces of the cultivation and consumption of chestnuts within the province of Rieti date back most certainly to the Bronze Age: in a cave near Val di Varri in the township of Pescorocchiano, archeologists have discovered the carbonized remains of bovine, ovine and mainly swine fauna, as well as of chestnuts. During the Middle Ages, the farming of fruit chestnuts developed rapidly: the first existing traces go back to the VIIIth century when the refined fruit chestnut became widespread in the Velino valley in the zone of Antrodoco and Cicolano, whose environment is ideal for chestnut growing because of the nature of the soil. Gradually, the chestnut integrated the diets of the poor and became a valid substitute for cereals when combined with potatoes and legumes. This was the beginning of a tradition that is today embodied by the “Rosso Cicolano” and “Marrone Antrodocano” varieties of chestnuts.



PRODUCTION ZONES:

The “Marrone Antrodocano” variety grows in the Velino valley, while the “Rosso del Cicolano” flourishes in the Turano valley where high fruit chestnut forests thrive in the “Castanetum”, a phytoclimatic zone situated at an altitude of between 400 and 1,200 metres a.s.l. with deep acid siliceous soil that is loose, light and fresh; the average annual rainfall is 600-800 mm and minimum temperature rarely goes under 15-16 degrees centigrade.

ORGANOLEPTIC PROPERTIES:

Rossa del Cicolano

The husk contains no more than three fruits.

Form: roundish, with the presence of tomentum on the apex, reddish brown pericarp that darkens after the ‘curatura’, (immersion of the chestnuts in ambient temperature water for 7-9 days).

Flavour: delicate and sweet,

Marrone di Antrodoco

The husk contains no more than three fruits.

Form: roundish, with the presence of tomentum on its small apex, light brown pericarp, with various prominent streaks, easily detached from the episperm.

Flavour: sugary.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

The fruit contains vitamins (C, B1, B2, PP) and minerals (calcium, chlorine, iron, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, sodium and sulphur) with an average caloric value of approximately 200 Kcal per 100 grams, while the dried chestnut has a caloric value of approximately 370 Kcal per 100 grams with a higher content of minerals and vitamins (except vitamin C which is dispersed during the desiccation process).

PRODUCTION PROCESS:

The fundamental cultivation processes are the pruning of the trees, elimination of surrounding weeds and infesting shrubbery by mowing and removal of the debris: the entire process is naturally biological. Direct intervention is limited to the selection of the chestnuts by grading, followed by their sterilization in boiling water, immediate cooling and drying. Polishing by means of a non-invasive automatic brushing machine is the final touch.

USE:

Chestnuts are used in preserves, dried, ground into flour, in jams, as components of desserts and main courses or eaten whole as delicious marrons glacés.

THE BORBONTINO BEAN



ORIGIN OF THE NAME:

The Italian word fagiolo (bean) derives from the Latin phaseolus and from the Greek φασέλιος, whose etymology stems from the same root as φάγω I eat, to indicate the high nutritional value and importance of the bean for Man.

HISTORY:

Among leguminous plants, the bean is surely the most renowned and widely used today. Prior to the discovery of America, only small white beans with black spots called “dell’occhio,” belonging to a completely different genus of pulses, were known in Europe. At the beginning of the XVIth century, precisely in 1532, the Spanish introduced new varieties of beans from America to be cultivated in all their occupied European territories. In Italy, bean growing, associated with all the poor economies, found a particularly favourable terrain in Borbona, whose fertile soil and lay of the land, together with family traditions linked to the mountain survival economy, brought about a qualitative natural selection for the product that was originally destined for home consumption.

DESCRIPTION:

The Borbona bean belongs to the borlotto variety; its plants attain a height of approximately 1.80 2 metres, with long straight pods of about 14 18 centimetres.

ORGANOLEPTIC PROPERTIES:

This type of bean is large, kidney shaped with purple streaks on a thin cream coloured skin. The flavor is delicate and the beans are easily digestible.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

Borbontini beans are rich in proteins and contain complex carbohydrates, vitamins B and PP, iron, calcium and fibre (situated mostly in the outer skin) about 6.59 per 100 grams of produce.

PRODUCTION PROCESS:

Beans are planted in ploughed earth at about 750 metres a.s.l. in the second half of May.

Small holes are dug at short distances and filled with 5 6 beans; they are then covered with earth. The plants are set in rows that consent uniform exposure to the sun and easy drainage of rainwater.

The plants are hoed twice to favour vertical growth on fixed supports; subsequently only occasional irrigation and hoeing to eliminate weeds are necessary.

Towards the beginning of October, the beans are harvested by hand; successively, they are shelled from their pods and set to dry in the sun on sheets to foster conservation.

USE:

Beans are a basic ingredient for soups and side dishes; they can also be made into salads; an ideal combination is with pasta, celery, carrots and bacon.



AMATRICIANO CURED HAM



ORIGIN OF THE NAME:

The etymology of the word prosciutto (ham) goes back to the idea of preserving raw pork: the initial part of the word identifies the first operation (pre or pro) that permits the realization of the exsuctus (from ex-sugere), for the Romans "perex suctus," which indicated the expelling of humidity that guarantees long conservation.

HISTORY:

Swine breeding began in about the VIIth/VIth centuries B.C. in the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean, from Greece to Turkey; its history is closely linked to that of sedentary agriculture in central Italy. Before the Romans, the Etruscans used salting methods to preserve meat which are still in use today. The province of Rieti, where oaks and beech trees abound, swine farming is an intimate part of the local agriculture, as well as that of the surrounding hills. In the statistics of the Kingdom of Naples drawn up by Joachim Murat in 1811, the main typologies of products derived from pork in the northern part of the Rieti province were cured ham (prosciutto), bologna sausage (mortadella), sausages and black pudding or blood sausages, etc. Between 1877-1885 in the Jacini Inquest, Professor Piccinini wrote an Essay on the Cittaducale District where he noted, "The greater part of swine are bred by families... who raise one or more pigs for their own use... Every part of the pig is utilized, and its conservation is carried out both by drying as well as by salting. The population makes hams, lean salami, Amatrice mortadella, sausages from the meat, livers and lungs mixed together with fat and... garlic."



DESCRIPTION:

The hams are pear-shaped, excluding the trotter, with a front side featuring an ample uncovered part that extends vertically up to more than half the haunch (high paring) and weigh at least 8 kilos.

The ageing process lasts from a minimum of 12 to a maximum of 20 months after salting.

The colour is reddish pink interspersed with streaks of pure white fat.

The taste is savoury but not salty with a pleasant intense sweet aroma that can be perceived by inserting a needle into the meat.

The texture is elastic thus favouring compact slices.

ORGANOLEPTIC PROPERTIES:

Colour: red

Flavour: sweet

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

Fats: 22.1%

Proteins: 25.2%

Humidity: 49.7%

Kcal (*) 299

PRODUCTION PROCESS:

After a selection of fresh haunches based on weight, fat consistency, absence of aesthetic defects, malformations or poor physical conditions of the swine, the processing begins by placing the haunch in a refrigerated cell for at least 24 hours; the pork rind is then chafed and the haunch is salted. After remaining in the refrigerated cell at a temperature slightly over 1 degree centigrade, the initial salt is removed and the prosciutto is carefully pressed to avoid breaking the bone and to drain all the blood left in the meat. Next it is replaced in the refrigerator for at least 20 days. The salt is removed and the ham is re-pressed and hung in a shady, airy place whose temperature never exceeds 4 degrees Centigrade. The processing ends with the toilette to eliminate protruding bony parts, the washing and drying of the ham to get rid of the salt, the 'sugnaturo' to soften the outer parts and finally the ageing at ambient temperature not exceeding 15 degrees Centigrade.

USE:

Sliced prosciutto crudo in Italian cuisine is often served as an antipasto, or is used in the preparation of pasta sauces or main courses.

LEONESSA POTATOES



ORIGIN OF THE NAME:

The name 'potato' derives from the Spanish or Portuguese patata or batata. Originating in India – Linnaeus's *convolvulus batata* – the potato is an edible tuber obtained from the *solanum tuberosa* species, and is widely used in nutrition.

HISTORY:

Due to their presence in West African prehistoric sites, potatoes are considered by some researchers and naturalists to be one of the most ancient cultivated plants. In the New World, potatoes were surely the food of the Incas, who called them papas and considered them to be a gift from the goddess Axomana. Over 40 varieties of potatoes were known with light yellow, pinkish grey, brownish violet, dark, spotted and streaked skins. The self-sown potato was the staple food for the populations living on the high plateaus.

In the XVIIth century, the potato was introduced to Europe along with sweet corn, and became the staple food of populations afflicted by atmospheric catastrophes or wars. The potato has thrived in the Leonessa territory, situated at 1,000 metres a.s.l. with its rigid climate, long winters and pedoclimatic conditions. Thanks to the special properties of the soil derived from the filling of a Miocene lake full of lignite and calcareous-acid travertine, over the centuries, family traditions have developed the excellent Leonessa potatoes.



DESCRIPTION:

The potato (*Solanum tuberosum* L.) is a perennial herbaceous plant with an erect stem, nerved leaves and clusters of white or purple blossoms; its roots emerge from stolons that swell to form edible tubers.

The tuber has a sub-spherical form with a varied-coloured skin from beige to reddish and a paste that goes from white to yellow.

ORGANOLEPTIC PROPERTIES:

In the Leonessa area, the most frequently cultivated varieties are:

- Desirée with pink skin and yellow paste
- Agria with white skin and yellow paste
- Marfons with smooth white skin and yellow paste.

Thanks to the pedoclimatic conditions that characterize the Leonessa plateau and farming techniques, the features of the Leonessa potato render it a high quality product.

As the potatoes, when exposed to light, tend to sprout and develop a greater quantity of solanine and tropeine, natural toxic substances which are, however, completely eliminated in cooking, it is best to conserve them in a dark, dry and well-aired place to avoid sprouting.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

Potatoes have a high calorie count, with a just balance between starches and sugars as well as a good amount of vitamins A, B1, B2, C, E; there is a quasi total absence of fats.

PRODUCTION PROCESS:

Following an accurate preparation of the terrain to facilitate drainage and avoid stagnation, properly prepared pieces of tuber that have been conserved in dry aerated places are interred in adequately spaced rows; during growth, the seedlings are covered with earth so they do not to turn green and are irrigated sparingly.

USE:

Potatoes are excellent for the preparation of first courses such as gnocchi served with traditional lamb or refined black truffle sauces, with fish or omelettes, salads, savoury pies, every kind of soup, and are ideal as side dishes.

RASCINO LENTILS



ORIGIN OF THE NAME:

The word derives from the Latin *lenticula*, diminutive of *lens*, indicating the lentil seed.

HISTORY:

The lentil is perhaps the most ancient pulse cultivated by Man in prehistoric eras; it was grown in 7,000 B.C. in southwest Asia and gradually extended throughout the Mediterranean basin becoming a staple in the diet of ancient Greece and Rome; in the Book of Genesis, Esau sold his right of primogeniture to his brother Jacob in exchange for a plate of lentils.

According to a consolidated theory, the name of the Roman gens *Lentuli* derived from the Latin *lens*= lentil.

In Roman history, Cato the censor imparted rules for the appropriate way of cooking lentils, and Galenus praised their therapeutic virtues.

Within the province of Rieti, lentil growing on the Rascino plateau was an integral part of local traditions, where each family cultivated half a cup of seeds to satisfy family needs and to pay homage to the leading figures of the area by presenting them with lentils in a money-bag as a good omen. Even today the Rascino lentils are renowned for their energetic properties and absence of fats.



DESCRIPTION:

The lentil plant is pubescent, with an erect stem, branches; its height varies from 10 to 25 centimetres.

Its leaves are pinnate and it has small white flower clusters streaked with light blue and violet.

The ideal terrain for the cultivation of lentils is sandy and only slightly calcareous; the ideal soils are red or volcanic.

The plant demands a mild dry climate, but can resist down to -6 degrees Celsius.

ORGANOLEPTIC PROPERTIES:

The Rascino lentil is rather small; its colour goes from reddish to light brown to black and it has a pleasant flavour.

The legume is flat, short, large and consists in one or two round (2-3 mm diameter) seeds slightly flecked with white.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

The following nutritional values refer to 100 grams of lentils:

CARBOHYDRATES	57,1 grams
PROTEINS	28.1 grams
FATS	0.8 grams
ENERGETIC VALUE	300 Kcal.
CALCIUM	51 mg
SODIUM	10 mg
IRON	8 mg
ZINC	2.8 mg
POTASSIUM	982 mg.

PRODUCTION PROCESS:

The seeds are sown at the beginning of spring and the lentils are harvested during the first two weeks of August. The equipment traditionally used consists of plough, roller, threshing machine, jute bags for the conservation of the seeds. Chemical fertilizers are not used and the harvest is often carried out by hand.

After planting, cultivation operations and rolling of the terrain are minimal, followed by scything and harvesting, separation of the seeds from the plants which are used as animal fodder; this form of cultivation is absolutely biological.

USE:

Lentils are used in all kinds of soups, as a side dish in winter or as a meat substitute for vegetarians.



AMATRICIANO LARD



ORIGIN OF THE NAME:

The Italian word *guanciale* comes from the Latin *ganacia*=cheek to describe the flat side of the face, but the meaning is extended to include the pig's head from which the triangular *guanciale* is taken.

HISTORY:

Guanciale is produced in the territory that goes from the Velino valley to the Laga Mountains (Monti della Laga), where it has become part of the staple diet of the inhabitants, who are prevalently dedicated to sheep-breeding and moving their herds to different pastures as well as to woodcutting activities. *Guanciale* ensures a constant supply of easily conserved high calorie food to the shepherders, thus permitting them to vary their diet, based on the products of their flocks. *Guanciale* is the basic element of pasta all'amatriciana, known the world over.

DESCRIPTION:

Seasoned triangular pork *guanciale* consists of a fatty part with lean veins; it is salted and seasoned with saccharose, aromas and spices (ground black pepper) and conserved in sections weighing approximately 1 kilo.



ORGANOLEPTIC PROPERTIES:

Triangular anatomic form of the pig's cheek; colour: red streaked with white, the fatty part is pink. Delicate savoury taste, slightly spicy. In some cases, after the salting, the *guanciale* undergoes a smoking and drying process over a wood fire.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

Average weight:	1.2 kg.
Fats:	29.2%
Proteins	21.0%
Kcal	347

PRODUCTION PROCESS:

The pig's cheek is first isolated and then squared off.

It is set to rest for 24 hours at a low temperature and is then sprinkled with salt or set in brine for a period of up to 10 days.

At the end of this salting phase, the *guanciale* is washed, smothered with ground black pepper and hot red peppers, rolled and bound with string.

Thus prepared, the *guanciale* is hung in aerated places until completely dry (ca 10-15 days); it is then left to 'ripen' for about 2-3 months in a fresh environment.

The salting process is always carried out on a wooden base, and wood is always used in the drying process that usually takes place in fresh and well ventilated areas.

USE:

Guanciale is chiefly used in *soffritti*, a sautéed mixture of finely chopped vegetables and bacon or ham, as well as in well-known dishes such as pasta "all'amatriciana" or "alla carbonara", in omelettes and in salads.

EMMER WHEAT (*TRITICUM DICOCCUM*)



ORIGIN OF THE NAME:

The Italian name farro goes back to the Latin far/fer = support, nutrition; emmer wheat is considered to be the earliest Roman food and is widely used in the preparation of basic desserts.

HISTORY:

Archeological digs document the existence of emmer in Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt and Palestine; on the basis of a historic-geographical analysis, it seems that emmer was already cultivated in the Neolithic Era about 8,000 B.C.; between the Vth and the IVth millennia B.C. the Badarian culture of Upper Egypt, which provides the earliest direct evidence of agriculture, cultivated triticum dicocum, which remained the dominant species in the Near East for thousands of years.

At the same time, the cultivation of emmer wheat spread to Anatolia and the Mediterranean basin. Triticum dicocum, grown for centuries by the earliest inhabitants of the Italian peninsula, the Romans introduced emmer to supply their armies as a substitute for barley according to the physician Galenus.

For the Greeks as well as the Romans, emmer had various uses in their religious rites: the grains were protected by Ceres, goddess of harvest and fertility; in Roman law there existed a rite called Confarreatio that consecrated the passage of a woman into the family of her husband.

In the province of Rieti, emmer wheat is grown, above all, from the Leonessa plateau to Rieti and is used in the traditional Sabine cuisine. A special variety of Emmer is cultivated in the Velino valley for exportation to Switzerland. Other varieties are grown in the Alta Valle of the Turano, but these are all linked to the poor agricultural economies of this mountainous region.

DESCRIPTION:

The triticum dicocum variety, with its compact medium sized ears, normally containing two caryopses, is the most widely cultivated species of emmer wheat.

ORGANOLEPTIC PROPERTIES:

Compact ears, two caryopses with vitreous or semi-vitreous consistency, phylogenetically related to durum wheat.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

For 100 grams of produce, Emmer wheat consists of 17% of proteins and yields 335 Kcal; carbohydrates average 70%, and there is less than 1% of fat.

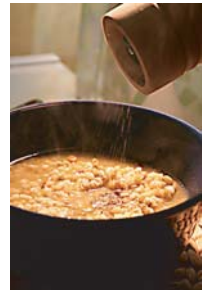
PRODUCTION PROCESS:

Sowing is sometimes carried out by hand on a terrain prepared with furrows, but the use of automatic seeders is becoming more frequent. In biological cultivation, the chemical treatment of seeds to inhibit growth of weeds is not allowed, however minerals and phosphorus are sometimes added to the soil when necessary.

Harvesting is carried out by threshing machines which free the ears containing caryopses, that remain within their glumaceous involucre until later when they are separated.

USE:

Emmer wheat is used for many kinds of soups, as a side dish, in salads and as flour for pasta, savoury pies and desserts.



SPICY SALAMI



ORIGIN OF THE NAME:

The word salamella, a diminutive name for salami, can be etymologically traced back to the root “sal”, relating to the use of the ingredient salt in its preparation, while “ame” implies a quantity, a combination or mixture of ingredients and products and the term specifically indicates salted pig meat, which is ground/minced and stuffed into skins.

HISTORY:

Pig raising in the province has been traced back to bronze age settlements, where pig meat was already used as part of the human diet; significant traces in the sources testify to widespread use in Roman times, with pig farms naturally associated with the presence of thick oak plantations, whose acorns were the basic foodstuff for the animals. In the middle ages, mention is made in the documents of the Benedictine abbey of Farfa, and again in the Statutes of Cicolano in the XIV century. In the period before the unity of Italy, the statistics compiled by Giocchino Murat after the Napoleonic invasion testify that the principle products derived from pig meat in the territory of Alta Sabina were: prosciutto hams, sausages, salted pork and black pudding. In the later “Inchiesta Jacini”, edited between 1877 and 1885, Professor Piccinini, in charge of drafting the report on the district of Cittaducale, in the chapter on breeds of pigs, affirms that “most pigs are raised by families who use one or more of them for their own needs, and they make meat sausages, salami and salted pork.

Throughout the territory, the historical tradition of butchering goes hand in hand with the need to be able to use meat all through the year, yet without recourse to particular refrigeration methods, through the preservation in salt, not just of entire parts of butchered animals, domestic pigs in particular, but also of the less worthy parts, suited for mincing and mixing.



DESCRIPTION:

Pork meat stuffed into casings, with a maximum weight of 400g. Dried and compact, ruby red in colour with uniformly distributed grains of fat, they are cylindrical in shape, curved into a U, with an average length varying between 30-40 cm and a diameter of 34-36 mm. They have a whitish colour externally, and when sliced, have a compact consistency and a particle size of 3mm.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Minced, fine grain pig meat, consisting of scraps, trimmings from other processing, and shoulder, flavoured with sea salt, garlic and black pepper with a touch of sugar. It has a sweet and delicate taste, ensuring lightness and ease of digestion.

NUTRITIONAL VALUE:

Values per 100g:

Edible portion: 97g - Kcal: 475 – Animal proteins: 22g - Vegetable proteins: 0g - Carbohydrates: 0g - Fats: 42.8g - Fibre: 2.4g - Iron: 20/21mg - Calcium: 20/21mg –

PRODUCTION PROCESSES:

The mince, normally prepared with a food processor at a room temperature of 12 degrees, after mixing with the flavouring, is stuffed into natural casings (pig intestine) and hung up to dry in cells with a constant temperature and humidity and static air, and then left to mature, on steel trolleys, for at least 30/60 days. Traditionally the first drying was done beside wood-fire chimneys.

USES:

uncooked in appetisers, sandwiches or for a second course together with cheese, egg and salad, and as an ingredient in cakes and other stuffed dishes.

