

DISCOVERING PRODUCTS FROM VALLE D'AOSTA

*from tradition to
DOP and DOC*

Valle d'Aosta is set between Mont Blanc, Gran Paradiso, Cervino and the Monte Rosa Massif, a region in which agriculture is well adapted to morphology, modelling the landscape over time and creating the right balance between nature and farming, human activities and the sequence of seasons. Many are the farming products, with predominance of products of animal origin. Mountain slopes are not suitable for intensive farming or husbandry, favouring instead cattle farming and – since the end of the 1800s – fodder over mountain cereals. Valdostana cattle breeds (Pezzata Rossa, Pezzata Nera and Castana) are double-purpose, that is raised for producing milk, used to make famous cheeses such as Fontina and little-known excellences, like Toma di Gressoney, but also for meat, the qualities of which are enhanced in the production of cured meat, ground meat and steaks. Four excellences have DOP quality marking (Fontina, Valle d'Aosta Fromadzo, Valle d'Aosta Jambon de Bosses and Valle d'Aosta Lard d'Arnad) and 31 products are classified as Traditional in a Ministerial Decree dated 16 June 2010, but there are many other typical local products. The most emblematic proof of the striving for quality combined to development is the success of wines from Valle d'Aosta, which are now the emblem of our region. Their quality is recognised internationally. Today wine-growers who have maintained many native vines over the last century have gained special attention. Some vines are unique in the world and are being very successful in these times of globalisation because of their authenticity. Each product – from fruit to honey, baked products to home-grown vegetables – has its own history and strong bonds to the land as confirmed in written and oral historical sources and in local craftsmanship. Small and large food and wine producers alike plunge their roots in the history of a people that perpetuate methods, celebrations and savoir-faire independently from simply seeking profits. The adoption of new technologies and the respect of modern hygienic procedures has in all cases allowed to maintain local traditions and customs. This booklet is an invitation to taste and discover the special products of Valle d'Aosta at the dining table by sampling the described delicacies and enjoying a festive welcome all year round in our region.

Giuseppe Isabellon

Councillor for Agriculture and Natural Resources

Ennio Pastoret

Councillor for Production Activities

This guide for discovering the food and wine of Valle d'Aosta aims at disseminating greater knowledge of local productions to sustain valorisation and international trade. It is the result of the collaboration between the Autonomous Region of Valle d'Aosta (specifically the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Department for Productive Activities), the National Institute for International Trade (ICE), the Valle d'Aosta Chamber for Businesses and Trades and the Chambre in the scope of a framework programme of the Regional authorities with the Italian Ministry for Economic Development to promote and valorise Valle d'Aosta and its excellences.

Given that the primary relationship between humans and land is through food, our objective is to help consumers – both Italian and international – to gain a more in-depth knowledge of culture and identity from which the quality of local food production derives, and to provide at the same time: a “memory tool”, that takes readers back in time to the origin of local traditions and products, a leap into history, to understand that the local food and wine products are the result of ancient customs which have been maintained to the current day and have been renewed while respecting origins; a “knowledge tool”, containing precious information on the features of each product and on its ingredients, describing ancient recipes, legends and interesting facts; a “comprehension tool”, because the food and wine from Valle d'Aosta is a niche in terms of production numbers and certainty of absolute excellence in terms of quality.

This guide is thereof a must-have descriptive and photographic aid for operators to understand the essence of products. Purchasing a product from Valle d'Aosta means buying a bit of the land where it was made grown or made, its history, its traditions, the constant commitment of its people and the production processes which are still tightly bound to skilful craftsmanship.

Above all, this guide is a promotional-commercial tool, designed to introduce a fabric of mainly small businesses also to international markets, small but with a strong inclination of opening out to grasp new opportunities, accepting new commercial challenges and tackling new areas and new interlocutors. As a consequence, the guide is available in French and English, in addition to Italian, and complemented by Volume 2, which is a directory of the businesses that make and sell the illustrated food and wine to allow to establish a direct contact between who makes food and who eats it.

This list – which is essential for ensuring product marketing – will be constantly updated on the Chambre website at www.madeinvda.it

Nicola Rosset

President of Chambre Valdôtaine

A complete guide, brimming with information and fully illustrated, that describes the farming and food traditions of a truly extraordinary land in accurate depth.

Reading this guide, operators and consumers will set off on an imaginary trip to exciting, captivating places. Legends, interesting facts and history alternated with recipes and technical descriptions of products making light reading of this complete, sophisticated description of the food and wine wealth of Valle d'Aosta.

The quality, variety and excellence of Made in Italy and the Italian cuisine culture are appreciated worldwide. It is no chance that Italy is the European country with the highest number of DOP and IGP products and of DOCG, DOC and IGT wines. Following and listening to nature, knowing how to protect and sustain non-intensive farming and marketing high-quality products both in Italy and abroad are deeply rooted in our traditions.

Production in Valle d'Aosta is a particular example of a local wine and food tradition which has known how to grow, develop and internationalise while maintaining a tight link with tradition and local territory. Know-how and flavours transmitted from generation to generation have distinctive quality, traceability and uniqueness features which go beyond regional boundaries to reach out to new markets. Tradition and territory are the promoters of typical Valle d'Aosta products on international marketplaces and for this reason this useful guide has been translated into French and English for use by foreign operators and consumers.

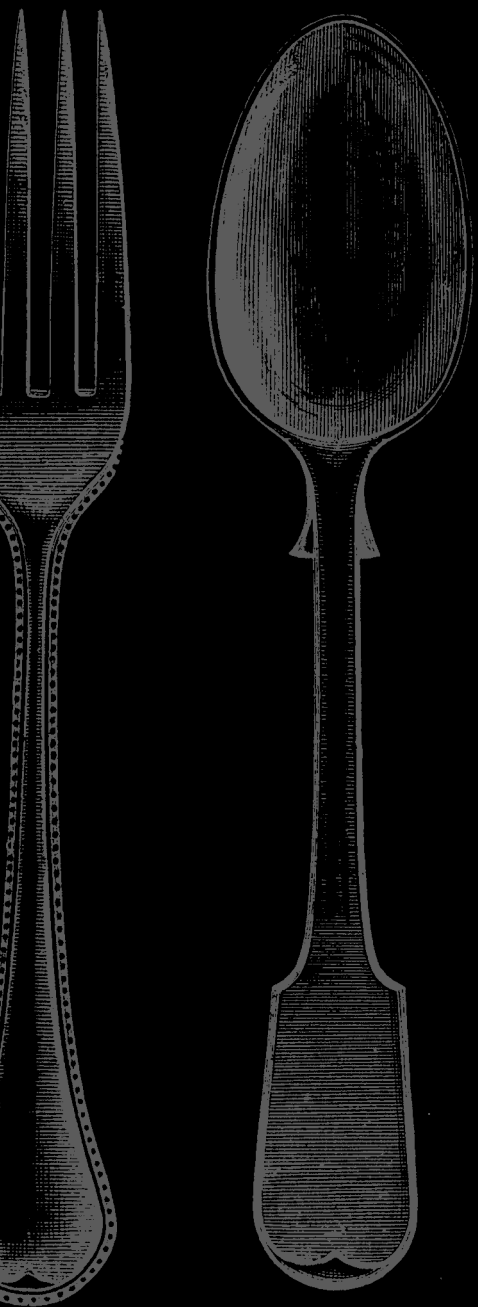
This handy guide is a discovery tool and a reference book for consumers and operators worldwide who want to find out more, learn, appreciate and use products from Valle d'Aosta. It consists of two volumes: this first contains descriptions of products from Valle d'Aosta while the second is a directory of businesses. The guide supports and complements the international promotion initiatives that ICE, the Autonomous Region of Valle d'Aosta and Chambre Valdôtaine are organising for companies and territory in Valle d'Aosta.

From the near European Union markets to the farthestmost, difficult and sophisticated ones, like Japan, food and wine products from Valle d'Aosta have enthusiasts who recognise and appreciate quality. For many years, introducing businesses and food and wine products of Valle d'Aosta on the international marketplace has been the objective that ICE shares with the Region, the Chambre and the businesses themselves. This guide is a useful, precious contribution to approach operators and consumers to high-quality food and wine from Valle d'Aosta – perfect representatives and ambassadors of Made in Italy worldwide – on the international marketplace.

Francesca Zadro

Director of ICE Torino
Regional Office for Piemonte and Valle d'Aosta
National Institute for Foreign Trade





TRADITIONAL



DOP



DOC



SPIRITS

page **8** **Milk and cheese**

- 10 Lasé
- 12 Fontina
- 14 *Vallée d'Aoste Fromadzo*
- 16 *Toma di Gressoney*
- 18 Soft goat cheese
- 20 Pressed goat's or ewe's cheese
- Mixed cheese
- 22 *Reblec and reblec de crama*
- 24 *Brossa*
- 26 *Seras and salignoun*
- 28 Butter

page **30** **Meat and salami**

- 32 Vallée d'Aoste Lard d'Arnad
- 34 Vallée d'Aoste Jambon de Bosses
- 36 *Bodeun*
- 38 *Sauceusse*
- 40 *Motsetta or Motzetta*
- 42 *Tseur achétaye*
- 44 *Teteun*
- 46 Jambon à la braise from Saint-Oyen

page **48** **Baked goods**

- 50 Pan ner
- 52 Famous cakes

page **54** **Fruit**

- 56 Rennet apples from Valle d'Aosta
- 58 Golden delicious apples and Martin Sec pears
- 60 Chestnuts
- 62 Walnuts and walnut oil

page **64** **Honey**

- 66 Rhododendron honey
- 68 Wildflower, dandelion and lime tree honey
- 70 Chestnut honey and other honey

page **72** **The family vegetable garden**

- 74 Potatoes, berries, herbs and vegetables

page **76** **Wine**

- 78 Local DOC wines
- 80 Donnas, Arnad-Monjovet, Chambave e Chambave moscato, Nus and Nus Malvoisie
- 82 Torrette, Enfer d'Arvier, Blanc de Morgex et de la Salle
- 84 Varietal DOC wines
- 86 Moscato bianco, Chardonnay, Müller Thurgau, Gewürs Traminer, Pinot Gris, Petite Arvine
- 88 Pinot nero, Cornalin, Mayolet, Gamay, Gamaret
- 90 Nebbiolo, Merlot, Petit rouge, Premetta, Syrah, Vuillermin
- 92 Grappa
- 94 Genepi and Ratafià



MILK AND CHEESES

The dairy farming year in Valle d'Aosta is split into two: a long winter, during which cattle, goats and sheep stay in barns and eat the fodder gathered during the summer, and six months spent roaming and grazing grass from the foot of the valley to high range pastures, on mountains standing higher than two thousand five hundred metres above sea level. New births are concentrated during the winter months: new-born calves can be looked after better in barns and their mothers can start full milk production, once the difficult birthing time is over.

In normal circumstances, cows are milked twice a day, ten months a year. That means six hundred milkings which equal, for an average Valdostana dairy cow, four thousand litres of milk. Besides, there is seldom only one cow in the barn and as a result, individual production must be multiplied by the number of animals. No cows are machines, and this simple fact holds true also for Valdostana cows. Numbers are only a way to help understand that milk is plentiful and that knowing how to manage it, wherever and whenever during the year, is important. This is where the skills of dairy farmers come into play: milk changes season by season. It is as precious as it is delicate. Summer milk from the high mountain meadows, is a basic ingredient of the famed Fontina cheese, while during the other seasons, other key factors – such as the beginning and end of milk production and the fresh green grass of new-found freedom, which confers other flavours and other aromas – must be taken into due consideration. Milking is always the same, either by machine or by hand, but the milk itself may differ and, above all, be processed and combined in scores of different manners. Very simple operations produce nothing short of masterpieces: adding rennet, heating, breaking, mixing, pressing, salting and knowing when to wait are the operations for making fresh, high-fat, low-fat, large, small, delectable, hard and soft cheeses. Despite their common roots, each cheese has its own history, its reason for existence, which results from centuries of processing and experience. Ancient know-how that is complemented by a special relationship: the one between humans and animals. And this relationship is truly a special one made possible by the low number of animals in each barn. Cows and goats each known their own name, they recognise their owner, know who they can trust and anticipate when they will be stroked or told off if they get into mischief. . . . A bit like pets, even though cows can weigh five or six hundred kilograms each. A profound expression of the character of these animals is found in their relationships with one another particularly when they need to establish a hierarchy within the herd. Butting, battering, pushing and wiliness are used every spring by the dominant cow to assert her power in the barnyard and on summer pastures. The enthusiasts of this behaviour organised a number of events based on this natural instinct: the *batailles de reines* (since 1958) and the *batailles des chèvres* (since 1997). Describing these fascinating challenges in a few words is impossible: they must be experienced in person.



LASÉ

Byword for purity, sweetness and abundance, milk is a nearly complete food, rich in proteins, fats, carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins.

Nourishment and main source of income for farming families of the past, it is still the basic ingredient of cheese and a great number of traditional dishes.



The Rutor glacier

A famous local legend has it that the Rutor glacier, one of the largest in the Valle d'Aosta region, was made of milk spilt by a mean, arrogant *montagnard* who refused a bowlful to a poor beggar. The man, owner of the richest pasture of the valley, was known to rather pour pans full of the precious, nutritious liquid onto the fields rather than feed the poor. This inconsiderate deed will be his downfall: the beggar was Jesus, who came to the mountains to put human charity to the test. Over the night, the milk turned into ice and in the morning the large, rich pastures and the man's own chalet had been entirely covered by the glacier that we know today.

This legend is as meaningful today as ever: wasting milk was inconceivable for our forefathers. Nothing was wasted, not even when it was processed: for instance, two products called *brossa* and *séras* are made from the whey that remains after making cheese. Milk is an extremely versatile raw material, which in its simple state is a genuine treat in itself. Generations and generation of shepherds have been known to enjoy a bowl full of *lasé arién* (freshly milked milk) to sustain themselves and get ready for a tough day in the high mountains. It was also used to accompany polenta and rice (*seuppa i lasé*) or served with flour (*péiloù blantse*). In a nutshell, alone or in company of other ingredients, lasé is a valuable, unique food, especially summer milk, with its warmth (if one is fortunate enough to drink some freshly milked), its characteristic foam and its concentrated perfume of high mountain pastures.



recipes

White Rice

INGREDIENTS FOR 6

1 litre of milk, 400 grams of water, 400 grams of rice, salt, 2 teaspoons of ground (or one piece of whole) cinnamon, 2 tablespoons of sugar, 200 grams of dry chestnuts.

Soak the chestnuts for 12 hours. Boil them for approximately ¾ hour. Heat up milk and sugar, cinnamon and a pinch of salt. When it reaches the boil, add rice and chestnuts and mix every so often for approximately 18 minutes. Add warm water if the rice becomes too dry while cooking.

From Aa. V.v., *Cucina di tradizione della Valle d'Aosta - Cuisine traditionnelle de la Vallée d'Aoste*, Editori Priuli & Verlucca 2007, p. 240



FONTINA

Some say this is the best cheese of all. What is sure, it is the product from Valle d'Aosta most known worldwide to the extent that in all restaurants, the adjective *valdostano* or *valdostana* means that the dish contains Fontina. The symbol cheese of Valle d'Aosta defends its singularity holding its name high despite the many imitations.



How to recognise it

Thin, brown crust, springy texture, straw-yellow colour and small "bird's eye" holes, poetically called "the eyes of sweetness": wheels weigh from eight to nine kilograms, are approximately forty centimetres wide and from seven to ten centimetres high. It is unmistakable and so is its flavour, sweeter or tangier according to its degree of aging.

How it is made

Fontina DOP is made in accordance with centuries of experience and tradition using raw, full-fat milk of a single milking. Not a simple task and one that keeps our dairies busy twice a day for many hours because good Fontina cannot be improvised. Milk must come from healthy, Valdostana cows. At 36°C (the temperature when it is milked), rennet is added and the resulting mass is broken up, heated (to no more than 48°C) and mixed (to bleed the whey). The tasty curd - called *pré* - is pressed for twelve hours. Afterwards, the wheels, still white, are pampered for approximately three months in aging storerooms where they are salted and duly brushed every day. Quality inspections on each wheel and marking then follows.

Interesting facts

- The name "Fontina" is linked to local toponymy.
- One hundred litres of milk are needed for one wheel, an amount that was too high for the dairy farms of yesteryears: This is why Fontina was the typical produce of mountain pastures where herds mingled and several farmers would team up to collect the amount of milk needed. During the 19th century, the first cooperative dairies were opened to collect milk during the winter months to make Fontina all year round. Modern cheese-makers and cooperatives have been making this famous cheese since the mid 20th century using more modern technology.
- **Fontina DOP**, particularly that of high mountain pastures, contains a high concentration of unsaturated fats which have interesting nutritional properties.
- The cheeses made in high mountain pastures even enter competitions. Every year, the "Fontina d'Alpeggio" competition tasting committee assess the cheese to rank it and name the winner. The competition was first started by Comice Agricole at the end of the 19th century with the goal - already back then - of awarding the work of local cheese makers and farmers.

website: www.consorzioproduttorefontina.it



recipes

Fonduta valdostana-style

INGREDIENTS

400 g of Fontina, 30 g of butter, fried bread slices, 4 egg yolks.
Remove crust and cut cheese into thin slices. Put cheese in a tall, narrow container, cover with milk and leave to stand for a few hours, or better one whole night. To prepare put butter, egg yolks and cheese soaked in milk into a double boiler and heat, mixing constantly with a wooden spoon. The cheese will melt, forming a block at first and then gradually mixing with the milk and egg. It will eventually turn into a smooth, thick cream. Successful fondue must never be stringy. Taste before seasoning because Fontina is usually salty enough. Add a pinch of pepper and pour the boiling mixture into bowls over slices of fried bread.

From "La Fontina, dove e come nasce", F.Mathieu, 1974



Vallée d'Aoste FROMADZO

Worldwide, the pressed cheese making derives from the need to preserve milk quickly before it goes off. Vallée d'Aoste Fromadzo is no exception.

Fontina was a labour-intensive cheese requiring large amounts of milk, and when dairies were closed montagnards needed to manage their own production in different manner making delectable cheeses and butter, a “cash product” to sell or barter.



Made with cow milk, optionally with addition of small amount of low-fat or partially skimmed goat milk, herbs and spices, the product of two milkings could be skimmed or partially skimmed according to butter making requirements (for family consumption or for selling) and storage time (low-fat cheeses keep better).

A product from the past

The name **Vallée d'Aoste Fromadzo DOP** is a bit long to say and difficult to remember but the cheese in itself preserves all the common sense of mountain people and identifies a product belonging to a large cheese family. The name combines the place of origin (*Valle d'Aosta* in Italian, *Vallée d'Aoste* in French) with the Franco-Provençal word *Fromadzo*, which simply means “cheese”. The name may be a recent one, but the cheese definitely is not: it is described in many historical documents as fromage *commun*, *maigre*, *ordinaire* etc. and it was depicted in the frescoed lunettes of the majestic Issogne castle in 1480. The addition of goat milk and herbs, such as juniper, cumin seeds or wild fennel seeds, add a special touch to the already very particular flavour of this cheese: mild when fresh, it turns sharper with a piquant touch when matured. It can be aged from sixty days to eight-ten months or more, and as a reflection of the various manufacturing methods it may also vary in shape. **Vallée d'Aoste Fromadzo DOP** is cylindrical, measuring from 5 to 20 cm in height and from 15 to 30 centimetres in diameter. Consequently, the weight of each wheel can vary from 1 to 7 kilograms. Texture is compact with small-medium sized eyes. In brief, considering the different production methods and considerable changes to appearance during aging, our advice is to check the brand, which is in common to all.



recipes

A special guest

Vallée d'Aoste Fromadzo is an excellent cheese to be enjoyed as is: when aged it is used to make many traditional dishes and to enhance the flavours of entrees, soups and potages. When fresh or briefly aged is perfect with rye bread and polenta. It pairs well with local red wines (Enfer, Torrette, Chambave Rouge, Arnad-Montjovet, Donnas). The fat percentage of “low-fat” versions is less than 20% of dry matter and 20-35% in other types.



TRADITIONAL



TOMA di Gressoney

Toma di Gressoney is the story of the Walser people of Germanic origin, proud cherishers of their customs, who established themselves in Valle d'Aosta in the upper Valle del Lys.

In a class of its own

While the *montagnards* of the middle and upper valley occupy large pastures with a great herds and are engaged in making Fontina DOP, Walser families have always preferred to manage their own herds on much smaller meadows. The smaller amounts of milk they produce is left to rest, according to tradition, for twelve or even twenty-four hours, in order to combine several milkings before starting to processing it. Tin-coated copper cauldrons, cool cellars for better skimming and careful aging are the key ingredients along with the perfumes of high range mountain pastures.

Small, tasty batches

Still today there are very few **Toma di Gressoney** makers: fifteen or so in small pastures and a few modern dairies in the lower valley. Consequently, this product is made in a very restricted area, but one that has managed to stand up for its name, maintaining particular dairy farming methods and traditions. Although this cheese was once a typical summer delicacy made by small herds near Monte Rosa, today it is made by specialised dairies that started production to satisfy consumer demand and can be found all year round.

How to recognise it

Toma di Gressoney has a smooth reddish or grey-brown skin and a straw-yellow texture with small, well-distributed eyes. As can be expected from a cheese made on small-to-medium sized farms, wheels are rather small, weighing from 3 to 6 kilograms, with a diameter from 20 to 30 centimetres. Texture is semi-hard, pressed and semi-cooked. Small amounts of goat's milk may be added.



recipes

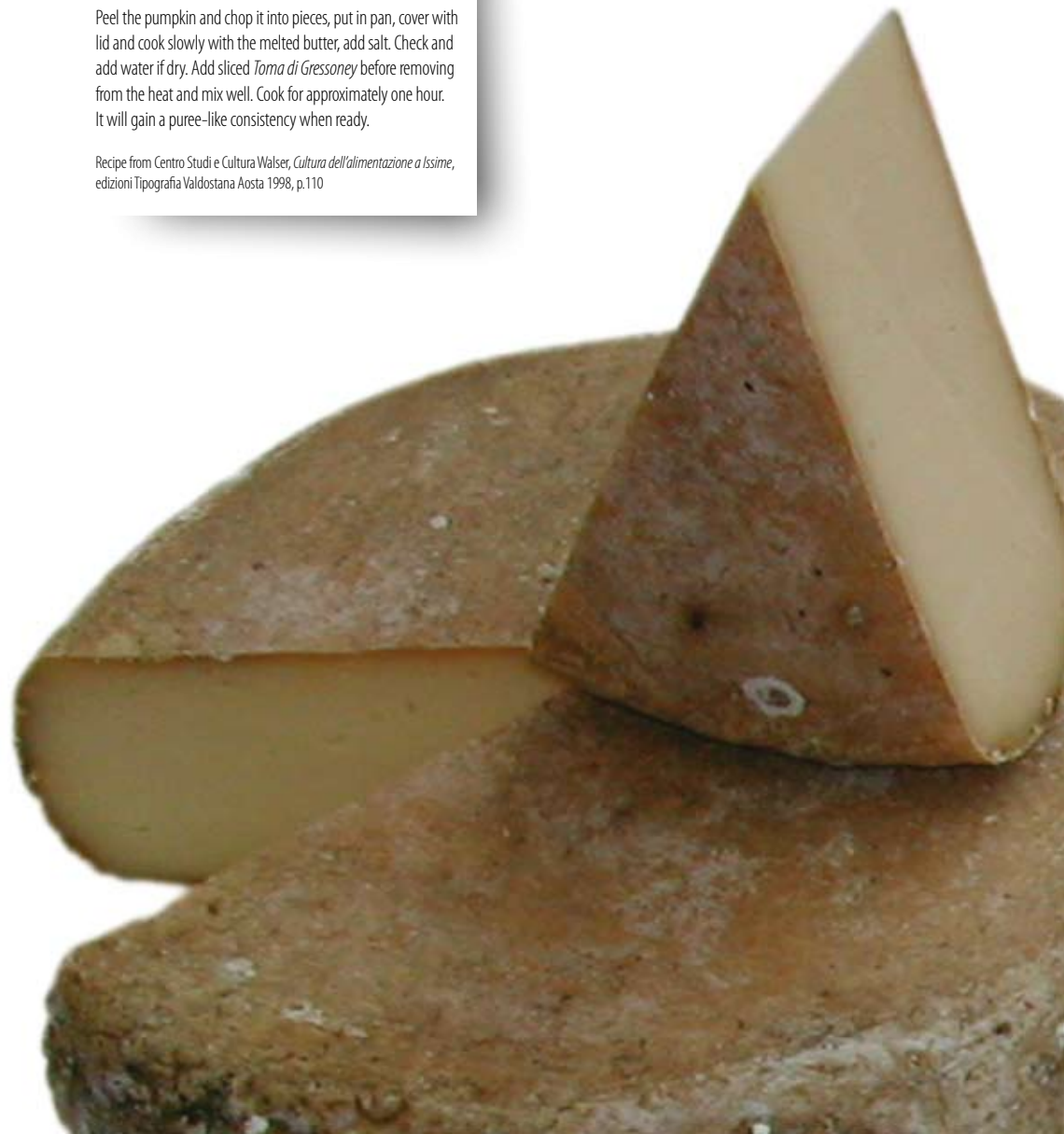
Pumpkin puree

INGREDIENTS

1.5 kg of yellow pumpkin, 75 grams of butter, 200 grams of mature *Toma di Gressoney* cheese, salt.

Peel the pumpkin and chop it into pieces, put in pan, cover with lid and cook slowly with the melted butter, add salt. Check and add water if dry. Add sliced *Toma di Gressoney* before removing from the heat and mix well. Cook for approximately one hour. It will gain a puree-like consistency when ready.

Recipe from Centro Studi e Cultura Walser, *Cultura dell'alimentazione a Issime*, edizioni Tipografia Valdostana Aosta 1998, p.110



recipes

These cheese can be enjoyed as part a traditional *mourdia* with bread and salami. Perfect with jam as appetisers or simply in pieces.

18



GOAT CHEESE

Traditionally, goats are never herded on their own. Today's trends are to enhance the value of goat's milk. Local producers are making a good name for themselves in this area as a result of their commitment and professional approach.

A rich variety

If you have the chance of visiting a local food market in Valle d'Aosta you will certainly see displays of goat cheese and you will undoubtedly be amazed by the huge variety of shapes, colours and flavours. In a small region like ours, production is understandably limited in terms of quantity but this is balanced out by a very high quality level, recognised nationwide. Goat cheeses belong to two major groups.

Lactic

The cheeses which usually attract the most attention and curiosity of consumers are lactic varieties, that is slow clotting goat cheese to be eaten fresh, to which manufacturers add special flavours or coat them to make them tastier: vegetable charcoal, spices, chestnut leaves. The white delicate texture of the cheese is naturally protected in this way to enhance its appearance and, above all, its taste. A delight for the eye and the palate.

Rennet

These cheese are made using the classic, quick clotting method. Rennet is added at a temperature of approximately 36–37°C and the mixture is left to rest for 40–45 minutes. When it is ready, the curd is broken into corn-sizes pieces. It is left to drip, arranged in racks without pressing and turned three or four times. It can be matured for approximately 20–25 days in cool aging cellars. The cheese in salted dry or in brine.

The producers

Saanen are tame goats, as white as the plentiful milk they make and Camosciate are excellent milk producers. Majestic, proud and haughty are the Valdostane. These are three local breeds of goats. A special event on May 1 is dedicated to these little milk "queens" when the *Reine dou Lasé* competition finals take place in Aosta (Croix Noire Arena). The "Queen of Horns" is instead awarded either at the end of October or beginning of November. In this competition, the dominating ewes that win the non-violent goat fights organised by farmers and enthusiasts take part in the great regional finals. The eliminatory rounds are split into two parts, one in spring (from mid-April to mid-May) and ends in Autumn (from September to end of October).

recipes

Mixed cheese is excellent as it is and great for cooking. It is particularly suited to be served with our local vegetables, finely grated on slices of toasted bread and in farmhouse soups. Pressed goat or ewe's milk cheeses are excellent added to soup, minestrone, potages and the like to make these heart-warming dishes even tastier.

20



PRESSED GOAT'S or EWE'S CHEESE

MIXED CHEESE

A bit of goat's milk does no harm. Indeed, it is said to be more digestible and was once used for weaning children. Any leftovers were added to cow's milk, once again confirming the "no-waste policy" of rural economy. *Vallée d'Aoste Fromadzo* and *Toma di Gressoney* both include the addition of goat's milk. A small touch that can make the difference.

Goat, goat + ewe, goat + cow!

The processing method of goat or ewe's milk, either neat or added to cow's milk, is the same. Timing and temperatures are crucial. Rennet is added at a commanded temperature of 34°-36°C. The product is left to stand, the curd is broken, it is left to drip for approximately 15-20 minutes after which the curd is heated to a temperature of no more than 40-42°C. The cheese is arranged on a rack and pressed either by hand or by applying a weight.

Mixed cheese

As many other varieties, the processing method of mixed cheese has never been set in writing. Rules are passed down generation to generation by word of mouth. However, despite the increasingly obvious specialisation of dairy farmers (cow milk, production of Fontina, goat milk and derivate products), good quality mixed cheese is a must in restaurants and on holiday farms. It may not have a name or written rules but mixed cheeses with their hard texture and rough skin are always present.

Rosset sheep

The recent revival of the local Rosset sheep breed is interesting. The sheep was mainly bred for meat and wool but ewes were milked after their lambs were butchered. The milk was added to goat's milk to make little cheeses for family consumption.

Cheese competitions

Given the increasing interest of consumers in these products, a regional competition has been organised for several years at beginning of September to which various types of cheeses are entered: pressed, lactic, mixed and more. An opportunity for meeting and discussing the quality of production.





REBLEC et REBLEC DE CRAMA

Reblec is the traditional fresh cheese of Valle d'Aosta which requires neither large spaces or complicated instruments to be made. All that is needed is a little milk and a little time to make an excellent food with a fresh, mild delicate flavour that can be turned into a sweet treat by adding sugar and cocoa.

A little cooking secret

It is said that **reblec** is typically made at home. Every good housewife knew how much milk was needed for the basis needs of her family. The milk was heated slightly and rennet was added. After clotting, the curd was removed, without breaking it up, placed in a cloth or form to let all the whey drip out. **Reblec de crama** is a bit more complicated. The basis of this product is naturally separated cream (at least 50%) to which a part of whole milk is added.

It is heated to 38-39°C. The curd takes about an hour and a half to do its work. The product is then placed in cloth or form to drip. Both products are fresh and must be eaten straight away. They have the fresh smell and flavour of milk, a pearly white colour and a soft, springy texture: the very picture of freshness.

Interesting facts

The name **reblec** comes from the Franco-Provençal verb *reblétchi* literally meaning "to milk again". This practice beyond the need to completely empty the cow's udder had a more ancient, economic twist. It is said that the *arpiàn* or *bitchoulé*, the workers in charge of herds, milked the cows first for inspections by the owners without finishing off. They would then complete the milking operation later on, during the evening or night. In this way, they would save because taxes were calculated on the amount of milk produced. The milk obtained from this clandestine milking was understandingly not much but it was rich in fatty matter.



recipes

Both types of *reblec* - simple and de *crama* - must be eaten fresh because they are all milk or cream and consequently do not keep well. It is usually served with *trifolle perboliye* (potatoes boiled in their jackets). Its delicate flavour is suitable for use in desserts: simply sprinkle sugar or powdered cinnamon or add a teaspoon of cocoa powder to *reblec de crama*. Little ideas for ending a great meal.

recipes

As mentioned, *brossa* was a staple of the pastures, a by-product which was adequately nutritious but which at the same time did not take any milk away from the main cheese-making production. This tasty cream has been re-appreciated in recent times and is today served in many restaurants and holiday farms. *Brossa* is also used to make a type of butter (*beuro de brossa*).

24



BROSSA

Brossa is a dairy product made from the whey that remains after processing cheeses made with milk from local cows, ewes and goats.

A precious cream

Brossa is a delightfully granular, soft “cream” made from whey heated to a temperature of 83–84°C to which vinegar or citric acid is added. When it reaches the required consistency, the surface layer is retrieved with a spoon made of wood, copper or steel. The product is left to cool down and then delicately beaten with a whip. It is then stored at a temperature of 6°C or cooler.

Interesting fact

As an alternative to vinegar a liquid called *bôné*, made of lemon juice, nettle root and wild sorrel, was used to start the fat separation process. “*Sente Colomba, manda de brossa tanque pe l'éponda*” was the invocation of dairy workers to Saint Colomba for plentiful products, and in particular “overflowing *brossa*”, this being an indication of rich milk.

Today, it is a gourmet food served on holiday farms or local restaurants. The special creamy taste of *brossa* is especially suited to be served to polenta.





SERAS and SALIGNOUN

Incredible as it may appear, there was still something left after having removed the curd and heated the whey to make *brossa*. *Séras*, a slightly sour tasting ricotta, ideal complement for polenta, is made this way. Herbs can be added to make *salignoùn*, the typical product of the lower valley.



This is the last link of the chain, the last step in whey processing. The whey is heated to 85°-90°C and vinegar or citric acid is added. The liquid clots and a thick, rough substance floats to the top. It is gathered with a spoon and left to drip. The resulting product is pleasantly granular and definitely low-fat. Interesting, *séras* is mentioned in 1477 by physician Pantaleone da Confenza who expounded its particular qualities and properties in his book entitled "Summa Lacticinorum".

A particular texture

For a bolder flavour fresh *séras* can be made into *salignoùn* with the addition of oil, vinegar, a pinch of salt, spices and herbs (garlic, juniper, fennel seeds, cumin, dried herbs and flowers, hot ground pepper). Typical product of the lower valley, it is a key presence at friendly banquets with salami, *pan ner* ("black" rye bread), boiled potatoes and local wines.

recipes

Séras beetroot jumbo tortellone

INGREDIENTS FOR 6

For the pasta: 200 grams of white flour, 2 eggs, 1 spoonful of extra virgin olive oil, 1 pinch of salt, 80 grams of cooked, blended beetroots. For the filling: 150 grams of fresh *séras*, 20 grams of cream, 100 grams of yellow bell pepper, 100 grams of green pepper, fresh savoury, extra virgin olive oil. For the sauce: 2 small leaks, 150 grams of cream, 20 grams of butter, salt, pepper, garlic and extra virgin olive oil.

Prepare the filling by cutting the peppers into small, even sized cubes and frying them in oil. Add *séras* and cream, mix well and add fresh chopped savoury. For the sauce: Melt the butter, add washed leaks cut into thin slices, add cream, salt and green pepper. Cook. Keep warm. Make pasta in the usual manner and add blended beetroot. Roll a thin layer, form a jumbo tortellino and fill it. Boil in salted water for a few minutes, drain well, dress with leak sauce and decorate with thin slices of garlic fried in oil.

Recette from Laura Zenti, *Balade gourmande au fil temps*, edizioni Le château 2004, p. 94





BEURO

The butter (*beuro*) from Valle d'Aosta is made on mountain pastures and in cooperative dairies throughout the region and has always played a fundamental role in traditional food. The origins of the various butter production methods are lost in time.



A small family

"Eunna litse de pan é de beuro", a slice of buttered bread, is the ideal way to start the day or a tasty snack. It is one of the simplest foods and is always present on farmhouse tables. Source of energy, condiment, irreplaceable ingredient for cakes and biscuits, butter – either white or golden-yellow – is made by processing local cow milk cream and cheese-making by-products.



a tavola

lo beuro coloù

Still today, some of the butter made or bought is turned into *beuro coloù*, or literally "melted butter". Excellent condiment, this special product is obtained by slowly melting butter and bringing it to the boil. After this, it is left to foam away on a low heat. It takes time, but the result is a clear, nearly transparent liquid. Our grandmothers used to say that it was ready when you could see yourself reflected in it like a mirror. At this point, it can be poured into glass containers or terracotta pots like in the old days. This procedure turned butter bright yellow allowing to keep it for a long time.

"Conserver le souvenir... se souvenir pour conserver"
catalogue of the exhibition at Maison de l'Alimentation, Introduction.

There are various types of butter:

- ***beuro de crama***, made from naturally separated cream, is the butter par excellence. In particular, this butter made during the summer on mountain pastures has a characteristic golden yellow colour resulting from the rich, varied fodder of the cows. This exquisite butter is made from whole milk during the cheese making process left to stand for at least twelve hours in special cream separating vessels. The cream is then collected and processed. Ideal with polenta and chestnuts.
- **churned whey butter**, made in large dairies and mountain pastures, the left-over whey is placed in a churn which pushes the buttermilk towards the outside of the vessel while the cream builds up in the middle. The cream is firstly collected, mixed with a little hot water and churned until it turns into butter. Single portions of butter are taken from the churn made into pats before being packed or shaped in wooden moulds with characteristic, traditional markings.
- ***beuro de bossa***: bossa butter is made in summer on high mountain pastures and in some dairies in the lower valley in winter. Aged *bossa* (see "*bossa*" section for more information) is churned with a little warm water and turned into butter. This butter has a bright, straw-yellow colour with full scents and flavours that are reminiscent of the original ingredients: straw, grass and milk.

Craftsmen leave their mark

Each family used to have a wooden mark (a sort of decorated wooden plate applied on a face of pat of butter) or their own rectangular boxes that moulded the pat of butter and impressed a design on its top to identify their production in cooperative dairies. There are many traditional patterns, all inspired by nature or religion: flowers, animals (particularly cows), Christ's monogram, hearts, crosses, suns, stars or more simply the owner's initials.



MEAT and SALAMI

Unlike milk that needs to be dealt with (either sold or processed) twice a day, meat processing was an event that many families turned into a feast. *Betsi-i* was an important moment in domestic economy. During the month of December, to make the most of winter chill, a cow or a young bull was butchered along with a pig. Meat was typically a Sunday dish, the symbol of wealth, and having a good store of salami and meat in brine was a good omen for the future.

The season is no longer as binding today, but family members still enjoy getting together: packing meat (in bags instead of wooden pails filled with brine) must be done quickly and well and everyone has a task to carry out. To surprise friends and close or distant family members, each has family learnt how to use various herbs and spices and has well-kept secrets for making the tastiest cured meats, from the classic *saoucesse* and *boudin*, the staples of any self-respecting food store in Valle d'Aosta, to the more complex and delicate specialities.

Local meat

Housewives were wary at the start: when Valdostana meat first appeared in supermarkets it was welcomed with expectable chill. "It is tough, difficult to cook", they said. The reason why is clear: cows and goats get about, they spend six months a year roaming in the open-air and in the sunshine, enjoying life in herds. Centuries of selection – first natural and then intentional – has created a rustic type of cattle and goats whose meat is special and worth sampling. Our suggestion is to try a portion of raw ground meat, possibly dressed with walnut oil or raspberry vinegar, or a roast with lovely gravy.

Guaranteed origin

The livestock bred in Valle d'Aosta is strictly identified well into the butchering process. The adopted control system traces native livestock born and bred in Valle d'Aosta. The AREV¹ meat labelling system adopted on a voluntary basis by a high number of local farmers and operators (slaughterhouses and shops) guarantees the origin of the meat sold to consumers along with information on the farm (name and location) and on the animal itself (age, category, breed). Meat cuts are monitored by a voluntary quality control system and available in an increasing number of shops, restaurants and, obviously, holiday farms. The farmers who want to join the system must agree to follow its rules. In addition to beef, AREV is currently developing a mutton labelling system with similar features of clarity and seriousness.

¹ Association Régionale Eleveurs Valdôtains, organisation founded in 1978.



Vallée d'Aoste LARD D'ARNAD

Butchering pigs was a tough job and one that involved the whole family and all the neighbours.

Today, the ingredients come from five northern Italian regions but the people of Arnad are still first in class when it comes to making **Valle d'Aosta**

Lard d'Arnad DOP.

info www.festalardo.it

White lard and raw materials

No traditional platter is complete without Valle d'Aosta Lard d'Arnad DOP! A platter here is an enticing presentation of traditional salami and cured meats on a wooden board. The delicate white of this exquisite lard, with its rich smell and herby flavour that can only be the result of careful processing, stands out amongst dominating red. Various sizes ready for consumption are sold: slice thinly to appreciate all its excellent features. So-called "heavy" pigs are used to make Valle d'Aosta Lard d'Arnad DOP, that is swine at least nine months old and weighing 160 kg or more. They come from five northern Italian regions: Valle d'Aosta, Veneto, Lombardia, Piemonte and Emilia Romagna. Importantly, the meat is processed only in one place in Arnad, a village of the lower valley, that has made flavour its mission.

From shoulder to *doil*

The product is made from the shoulder and back of the pig. Spices (cloves, nutmeg, juniper and local herbs) are used in addition to the fundamental ingredients: brine, garlic, bay laurel, rosemary and sage. All ingredients are arranged in layers in *doil*, containers made of chestnut, oak or larch wood, alternating one layer of lard with a layer of herbs, spices and salt, to fill the container. It is all covered with salty water. With regards to timing, lard must be arranged in *doil* a few days after butchering the pig. The meat must be aged in the wooden container for no less than three months: Timing is essential to bring out all the goodness of the lard, the herbs and the spices.

Basic ingredient

Valle d'Aosta Lard d'Arnad is used to add a special touch to many dishes and to complement other cured meats. A cube of lard is a basic ingredient of barley and chestnut soups, and a accompaniment for boiling dried chestnuts. Perfect with plums and shrimp, it is a unique tasting experience when sampled as is. Such plentiful, frequent use could only be celebrated. Besides, it is known that the people of Arnad are very hospitable. This virtue is epitomised in the Lard Festival which every year in summer attract thousands of visitors during the last weekend of August.



recipes

Valle d'Aosta Lard d'Arnad croutons

INGREDIENTS FOR 4

8 slices of Valle d'Aosta Lard d'Arnad, 8 slices of rye bread or 8 slices of toasted polenta.

Toast the slices of bread under the grill, turn them and arrange a slice of lard on each so that the head melts the fat. Mountain honey or butter can be spread on the bread before placing the lard on top.

From *Il Cucchiaino d'Argento*



Vallée d'Aoste JAMBON DE BOSSES

What is so special about the air in Bosses? This is a dark red mystery, the colour of *jambon*, and one that is simply solved by sampling this gourmet velvety high mountain ham made by the villagers who know how to enhance their art.

Where is it made?

Bosses is a small mountain village, the last on the way to Switzerland. The houses surrounded by pastures and overlooked by peaks and hills cling to the steep slopes. This Alpine landscape with its cold winters and balmy summers is home to one of the most exquisite products of the region. **Vallée d'Aoste Jambon de Bosses**

DOP is made from the best Italian swine hams to which mountain herbs and spices are added. Patience is needed for aging in contact with local straw for at least twelve months: maturing can continue for eighteen months of more to enhance the flavours even more. The mountain assists production with its reviving air and rich plant variety despite the altitude. The result is an aromatic product with a sweetish flavour and intense perfumes. It may be eaten by itself or with rye bread, butter, honey and walnuts. Like other villages in the Grand Combin area, Saint-Rhémy-en-Bosses has its own summer festival with attracts many tourists and food enthusiasts. The Bosses festival is obviously devoted to the *jambon*, and more: for several years now the village has staged a special "colour inspired" event. Being raw ham its symbol, the colour red was chosen for a food and wine experience spanning from wine and salami to fruit. A precious *fil rouge* worth being checked out time and time again every summer, in mid-August.

Interesting fact

The shape of the **Jambon de Bosses DOP** brand is a homage to the traditional carnival characters of the village, the *landzettes*, with their bright coloured costumes, beads and sequins reminiscent of Napoleon's army uniforms (who incidentally crossed the Grand San Bernardo pass in 1800).

Info: www.jambondebosses.it

recipes

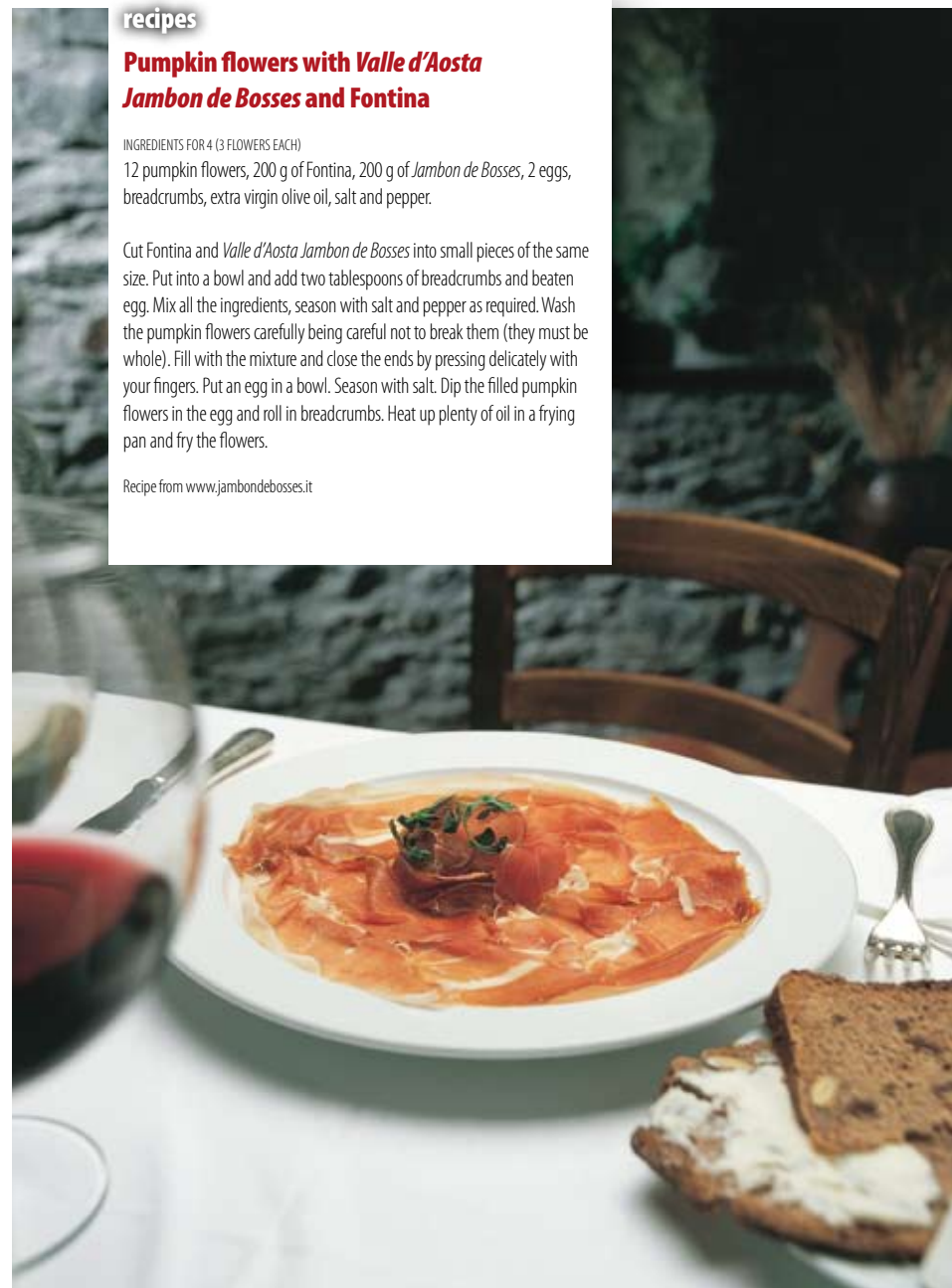
Pumpkin flowers with Valle d'Aosta Jambon de Bosses and Fontina

INGREDIENTS FOR 4 (3 FLOWERS EACH)

12 pumpkin flowers, 200 g of Fontina, 200 g of *Jambon de Bosses*, 2 eggs, breadcrumbs, extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper.

Cut Fontina and *Valle d'Aosta Jambon de Bosses* into small pieces of the same size. Put into a bowl and add two tablespoons of breadcrumbs and beaten egg. Mix all the ingredients, season with salt and pepper as required. Wash the pumpkin flowers carefully being careful not to break them (they must be whole). Fill with the mixture and close the ends by pressing delicately with your fingers. Put an egg in a bowl. Season with salt. Dip the filled pumpkin flowers in the egg and roll in breadcrumbs. Heat up plenty of oil in a frying pan and fry the flowers.

Recipe from www.jambondebosses.it



recipes

Excellent mid afternoon snack or just for a bite, when fresh it can oven roasted and served with red mountain potatoes. A true delicacy for connoisseurs, it can also be used to fill ravioli.

36



BOUDIN

A constant presence on platters on all tables, from restaurants to pastures, partnered with compact, tasty *saouseusse*, *boudin* either as it is or oven-roasted has a delicate flavour of its own.

Processing

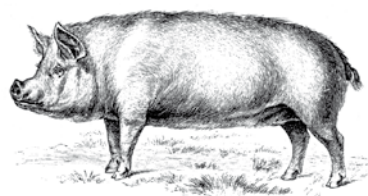
There are many *boudin* recipes according to area of production. The bright purple colour is due to the presence of fresh pig blood but in the upper valley, in particular in the Val digne area, beetroot (called *carotte rodze* in patois) is added to the meat. This practice has become more and more widespread and today in most cases the bright red vegetable is used although blood tends to confer a sweeter taste to the final product. A high percentage of potatoes is used in the lower valley. In brief, every area of the region as its own *boudin* recipe. In general, potatoes and beetroot are boiled, peeled and put through the meat grinder with lard. Spices, herbs and seasoning is added (including pepper, cinnamon, ground cloves, nutmeg and garlic, the latter crushed and marinated for several hours in red wine). The mixture is packed in gut and tied at regular intervals to create a chain of pieces called *dèi* (fingers in patois). Care is needed because the *boudin* mixture is very soft and compacting with string requires skills.

A harmonic combination of flavours

Beetroot, wine, garlic, nutmeg, lard. Who can resist sampling a "taste bomb" made with such ingredients? On the contrary, due to a curious alchemy, the flavour of *boudin* is in most cases extremely delicate and sweet, the right balance between ingredients of vegetable and animal origin. The product can be eaten either fresh or matured.

It must be left to dry for from seven to thirty days and its state must be monitored carefully during this time. The room chosen for aging must be ventilated and very cool to prevent ruining all the work done.

It must be vacuum-packed for longer aging.



SAOUSEUSSE

Casse-croûte, mid afternoon snack, package lunch or simple snack, *saouseusse* is a very versatile, transportable product. Interesting, the basic recipe changes: each manufacturer has their own notes showing the right proportions to be used.

The common ingredients

The basic ingredient is Valdostana beef, pork and lard. Spices and herbs (garlic, pepper, cinnamon and nutmeg) are added and the mixture is packed in gut. The string is tied to make 10-20 cm long sausages to make the mixture more compact and easy to prepare for eating. Like *boudin*, aging is crucial: as soon as the packing and tying operation is done, the *saouseusse* sausages must be taken to a dark room where they will be hung at a good distance from one another.

Manual skills

Measuring, mixing, grinding, packing and tying: skills are needed. Watching a family or farmer prepare *boudin* and *saouseusse* is like watching a ballet where everyone has a part to play. Fingers are swift to tie string around the gut. Slow movements are needed to fill it up. Energy is needed to mix the various ingredients in steel bowls. Evaluating the right balance of the various components before filling the packing machine is fundamental. Aging is equally important.

Directly from history books

There is no single *saouseusse* recipe, every family has their own recipe that is a well-kept secret. *Saouseusse* can be all beef, mixed beef and pork or all pork.

recipes

Saouseusse is an essential feature of a classic cured meat platter along with other local specialties. This product of many faces – that today is a delectable appetizer but was once the snack of farmers – is enjoyed by friends and tourists. *Saouseusse* is a very versatile product. It is suitable for many dishes and perfect for rapid, modern recipes. Excellent with rye bread and local wine for a simple snack.





MOTSETTA o MOTZETTA

The trick is in the thin slices: only in this way can the entire essence of the *motsetta* (or *motzetta*) be appreciated. The origins of this cured meat are lost in time. Spicy and aromatic, today its popularity has been revived as a key ingredient of the classic Valle d'Aosta platter.

A tender heart

The key word is concentration: compact meat (muscle or ham) and strong seasoning (a bouquet of sage, bay laurel, garlic, rosemary and mountain herbs). All mixed with salt and covered with the juices released by the meat itself. The meat is left to rest in an adequately cool room. Aging is variable from the twenty days of homemade productions, in which the meat is placed under a weight, while machinery which delicately massages the meat in the vacuum environments are used by small butcheries to obtain an even colouring of the slices while maintaining the traditional flavours. Regardless of the method used, *motsetta* is then hung in a fresh, ventilated place so that it can dry and age. *Motsetta* can be enjoyed fresh, when the slices have a tender heart, or aged, when the inner part turns evenly dark and tougher, but much more delectable because spices and herbs have had more time to make the taste more balanced and intense.

The secret of so much delight

Motzetta usually indicates beef, but other meat – such as goat, pig or game – can be used. Valdostana beef is ideal because the livestock pastured on the mountain meadows. Its colour, skilful processing and centuries of tradition make this variety of cured meat very prized. Excellent combinations include local wine and sparkling wine, walnut oil and local honey.

recipes

Fénis meat rolls

INGREDIENTS FOR 4

4 beef fillets, 40 g of *motsetta*, 100 g of butter, a small glass of brandy, a glass of cream, meat extract, white flour, salt, egg.

Arrange a slice of *motsetta* on each fillet and a small piece of Fontina on top. Wrap to form a roll and close with a toothpick. Roll in flour and beaten egg. Heat up butter in a pan, cook rolls, add brandy and a ladle of meat broth. Add cream and simmer down on a low flame.

Recipe from A.a. Vv., *Valle d'Aosta gastronomica*, edizioni Musumeci 1993, p. 75

recipes

Cut meat into pieces. Arrange a layer of meat in the bottom of the wood or terracotta container. Cover with one or more pinches of salt, chopped garlic and a few sage leaves. Arrange another layer of meat and seasoning, and so on, ending with a layer of seasoning. Cover the container with a perfectly fitting wooden lid. Put a weight on top and leave the meat for one week. Then remove some of the meat and cook it with potatoes and home-grown vegetables being careful to cover the rest of the meat well. The meat will keep in brine for another week. You will need to dry it to keep it for longer.

From *Les Bons Plats de Maître Barigoule - 60 recettes de la cuisine de la Vallée d'Aoste*, CTV, 1973

42



TSEUR ACHÉTAYE

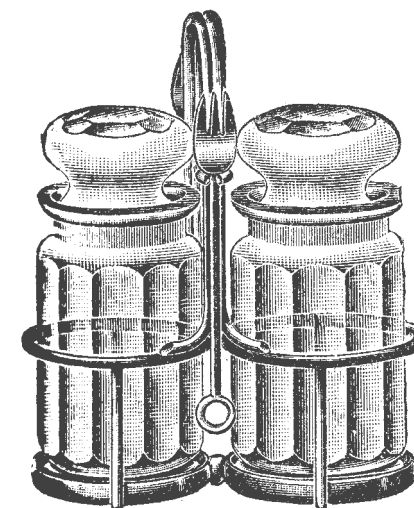
Excellent solutions have been invented by human ingenuity for meat scraps, like *saouseusse* and *boudin*, but the problem of preserving the higher quality cuts still remained. Salt and mountain herbs ensure unique flavours and a solution to the problem.

How it is made

Tseur achétaye is usually beef or mutton cut into thin slices. It is a close relation of the *motsetta* but obtained from other cuts of meat (shoulder, cutlets, silverside or rib). The seasoning is the same as *motsetta*, the spices and herbs used to make the brine being virtually the same, but in this case the product is not partially dried, and as a result the meat remains nice and tender. *Tseur achétaye* literally means "meat preserved in brine". But there is much more to it. It is not that easy to make and as nearly all traditional products it is the result of experience sent down by generations of campagnards who needed to exploit all their resources. The meat is cut into equally sized pieces is arranged in a pail and each layer is covered with salt and herbs (sage, bay laurel and garlic). The brine must cover all the meat in order to keep it. The meat may be eaten raw in thin slices or cooked in various manner.

Interesting fact

Some butchers in our region call it *tser a la messada* (meat in brine) instead of *tseur achétaye*.





A special type of cured meat

Various types of cured meats are obtained from beef, but unique to Valle d'Aosta is *teteun* made from adult cow udder. It has an ancient tradition and is made by arranging layers of *teteun*, sage, bay laurel, rosemary, juniper, spices and salt in special containers. After a fortnight (the time needed for the brine to form), the meat is cooked in a double boiler using special moulds.

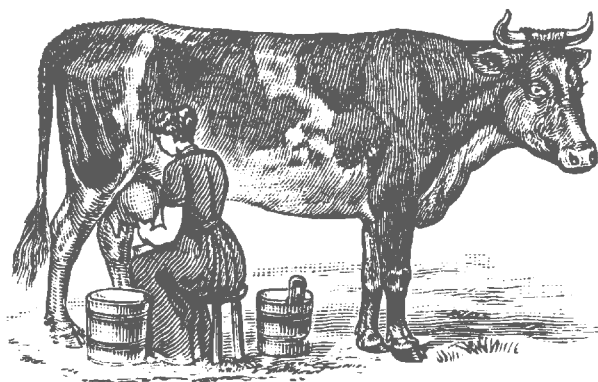
TETEUN

Among Italian foods, *teteun*, or cow's udder, is nearly exclusive to Valle d'Aosta.

A unique production system has made it the star of several local dishes and of a yearly festival.

Different recipes in different villages across Valle d'Aosta

The finished product turns pink. It has a compact, soft texture suitable for filling ravioli or for beef stew.

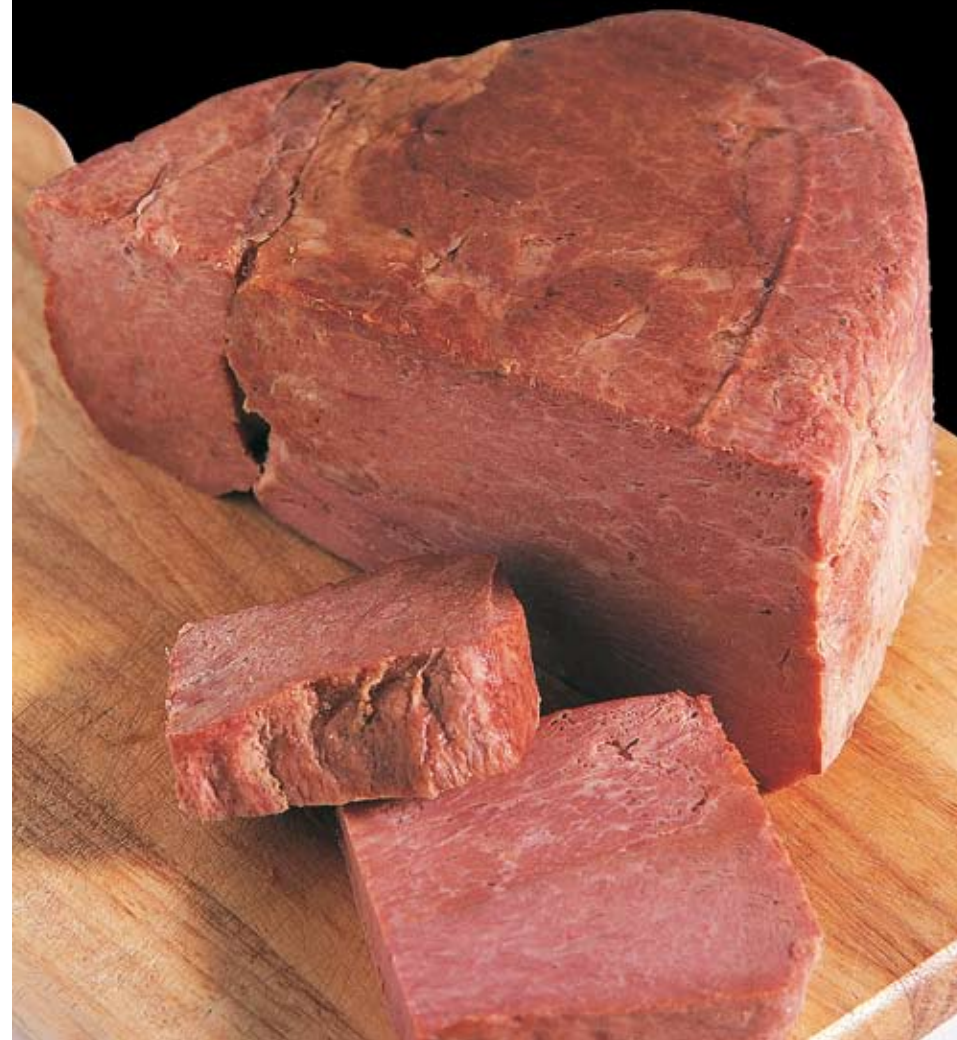


recipes

Teteun stew

Fat must be removed from the cured udder and it must be cooked for 2–3 hours. Prepare a base with chopped carrot, onion, celery and yellow and red bell peppers. Add *teteun* cut into pieces and season with spices, such as fresh ginger, turmeric, a pinch of coriander and a few cardamom pods (Indian curry may be used instead of turmeric). Cook for about half an hour and serve with vegetables.

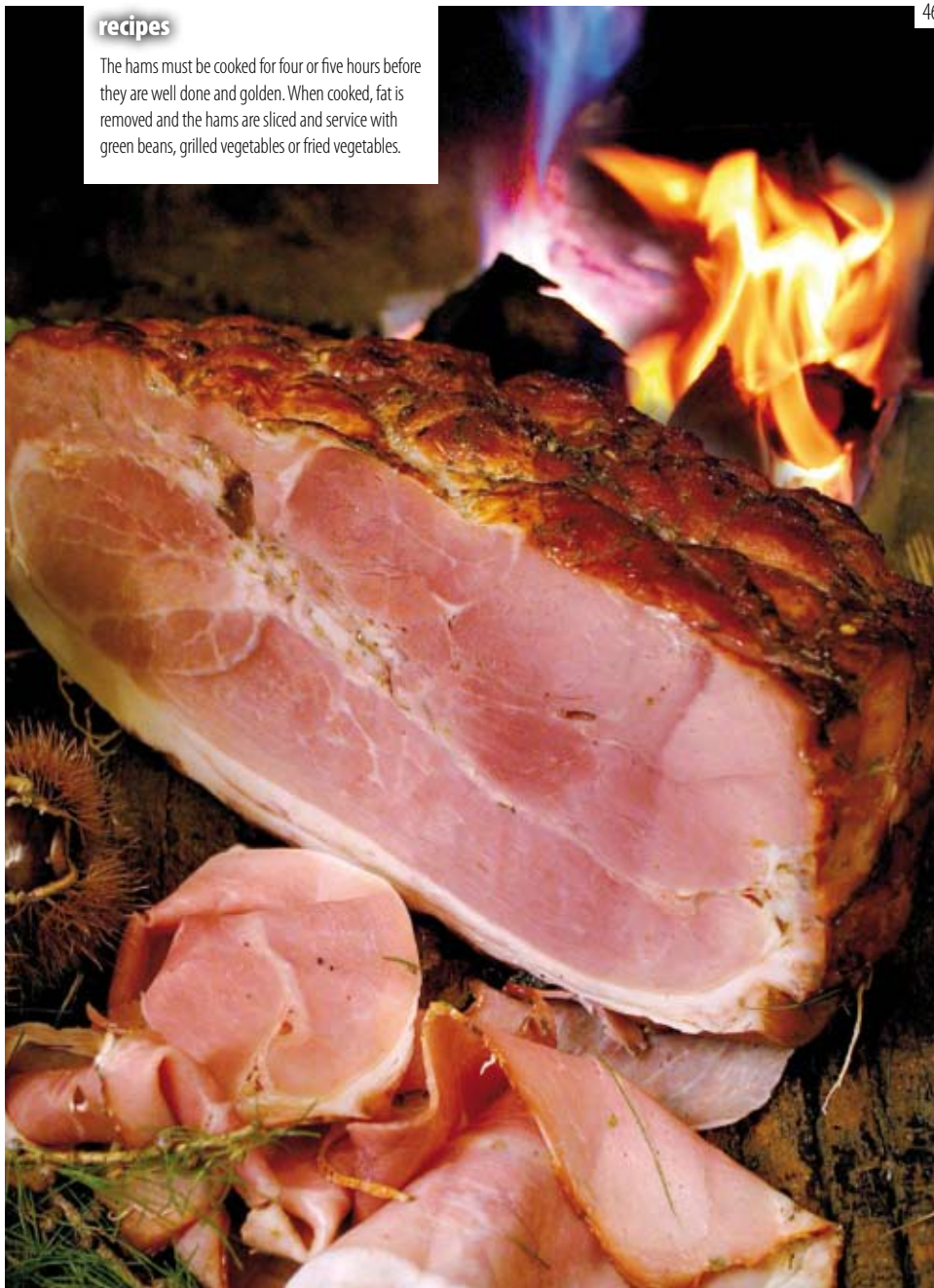
Recipe written and made by Milliery Lelio di Gignod



recipes

The hams must be cooked for four or five hours before they are well done and golden. When cooked, fat is removed and the hams are sliced and service with green beans, grilled vegetables or fried vegetables.

46



JAMBON À LA BRAISE SAINT-OYEN

Good neighbours are often rivals. While the village of Saint-Rhémy-en-Bosses is famous for its excellent raw ham, neighbouring village Saint-Oyen is equally devoted to its jambon à la braise. Rivalry to the obvious benefit of consumers who by within only a few kilometres can sample two unique products.

Information

Jambon à la braise is cooked, slightly smoked ham covered with herbs and spices. The ham is made from Italian pigs from Valle d'Aosta, Piemonte, Lombardia, Veneto and Emilia Romagna. The ham is cooked for approximately sixteen hours in a dry oven to that heart temperature reaches nearly 70°C, to ensure healthiness of the product. Afterwards, it is covered with water and local honey and then cooked on charcoal. During this step, a white wine (Petite Arvine, a local wine) based sauce is drizzled over the ham. Herbs, slow cooking and honey cannot make this unique by themselves: local wood from the high Great Saint Bernard valley is burnt on the fire (fir, beech, pine, alder and ash). Smoke carries the essence of the woods surrounding Saint-Oyen, affording that extra touch to the ham.

As other cured meats of the valley (*Teteun and Vallée d'Aoste Jambon de Bosses DOP*), charcoal cooked ham also has its own festival, which is held during the first week of August. This event was first organised during the 1970s but only ten years later came to celebrate the exquisite product of Saint-Oyen.



BAKED GOODS

Ovens were a special place in the social and economic organisation of villages in Valle d'Aosta. The dairy was open mornings and evenings for long hours. Schools and churches were open every day. Ovens were instead officially open in certain periods only. We are not talking about times long gone by but to a custom which is still well rooted in mountain villages although not as common as it used to be and found alongside the services of small bakeries.

"Black" rye bread and sweet treats can be easily bought from any bakery in the region or during food and wine festivals but many families still prefer to bake them themselves, repeating ancient traditional and creating the typical festive atmosphere of key moments linked to nutrition, like butchery.

The long shifts started at the end of November-beginning of December when families would organise shifts to stoke the oven day and night because once lit it was not allowed to cool down: controlling the temperature was very tricky and entrusted to the skills of the master baker. Ovens were once found in the large villages and the population would be split into "stations" according to proximity and tradition. Ovens refurbished by private citizens or local councils are used today. The basic bread making equipment included:

- *mét*, a sort of tank in which the dough was left to rise
- *tabla londze*, a large table with raised edges for kneading the dough and shaping the loaves
- *rablo*, a scraper with a very long handle for removing charcoal
- *paddle*, for putting loaves into the oven and removing them
- *froton*, a long stick with a rag on the end to clean the oven
- *lan*, long planks used to carry loaves before and after baking
- *ratelé*, racks where the loaves are left to dry.



PAN NER

In soup, in milk, with cheese and cured meat: pan ner is perfect for all seasons and circumstances. Sure, it turns really hard after a while but softening it is easy, for instance in a nice bowl of local wine and sugar.



Ingredients

Pan ner – literally “black bread” – is made from rye flour (*lo bloù* in Franco-Provençal) and wheat flour (*fromén*) in variable proportions: rye must be at least 50% of the total mixture. Water, yeast and salt is added.

Pan ner is round with a brown crust. In the past, rye fields used to cover most of the slopes of our region even at high altitudes. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a small farming revolution converted cereal fields into meadows for livestock. The landscape changed radically as a result and mills and ovens fell into disarray. Several hectares of fields have been devoted to growing rye for making bread for some years now. *Pan ner* comes in various shapes and the percentage of rye can amount to over 90%. *Pan ner* is today a niche product with respect to white bread, not like it used to be in the past!

The symbols

Bread is full of religious and pagan significance. Brotherly love, hard work, communion: bread represents this and is remembered in customs, small rituals and objects. Before cutting a loaf of bread, it is customary to trace a cross on the bottom of the loaf with the tip of the knife. Leaving a loaf of bread turned upside down, even by mistake, was to be avoided at all costs as this was felt as a lack of respect to towards the Lord’s “daily bread”.

For large collective baking operations, bread markings were impressed on the dough to identify each one’s batch. The markings were finely decorated with religious motifs, geometric patterns, flowers or simply with the family’s initials. *Épià*, a slit, was made in the top of the loaf to make it rise better.

Still today the *copapàn*, which consists of a thick wooden base and a blade attached to a ring, was used to cut stale, and consequently very hard, bread.

recipes

Seuppa de Pan Ner (Black bread soup)

Cut stale rye bread into pieces. Soak in a pan of cold water for approximately half an hour. Bring to the boil and add rice or pasta, to taste. When done, serve in a soup dish with grated Fontina.

Recipe from Aa.Vv, *Cucina di tradizione della Valle d’Aosta*, editori Priuli & Verlucca, p. 158

La piata

These cakes – a tasty treat for children of all ages – are ideal to end a meal or for a great break. Perfect with whipped cream or sipping wine.

52



FAMOUS CAKES: flantse, mécoulin and micooula

Plain *pan ner*, without any extras, was the staple of farmhouse food but fruit (walnuts, raisins and pine kernels etc.) could be added to the mixture in certain times of the year according to tradition and zone of production to make cakes that were thrill of children.

Fantse or flat rye bread, usually round, were made with the addition of a little sugar, butter, raisins, almonds and candied fruit when baking bread for the joy of the children (who obviously were more or less actively involved in the process). To make the gift even more special as still today it could be shaped like an animal, a typical presence in symbols in Valle d'Aosta, and decorated with sugar pastels. Today *fantse* containing white flour and cocoa, in addition to traditional ingredients, can be found.

Cogne

The cake *par excellence* typical of Cogné, at the feet of the Gran Paradiso, is called mécoulin. Made with whole milk, cream, eggs, butter, flour, yeast, sugar, raisins, lemon zest and rum, these cakes have a lovely amber colour.

Hône

The local cake called micóoula is made with whole-meal wheat and rye flour, chestnuts, raisins, butter, eggs, salt and sugar. Originally, *micóoula* was the name of a type of chestnut bread made in the Champorcher valley. Over time, many ingredients were added. Cake is typically made before Christmas. The *micóoula* festival is held on 8 December (Feast of the Immaculate Conception) in Hône to taste and appreciate this typical cake.

Issogne

The castle of Issogne is famous, less so is the *piata*. This baked treat comes in two versions: sweet and savoury. Sweet *piata* is made with wheat and rye flour, walnuts, almonds, raisins, eggs, apples, sugar and butter. The savoury version, on the other hand, is made with wholemeal wheat and rye flour, garlic and cumin.



FRUITS

Accustomed as we are to having all types of fruit available all year round we have lost the habit of eating fruit when in season and of preserving it in different ways. Apples, pears, walnuts and chestnuts have an enormous potential that goes well beyond fresh consumption. Our grandparents were accustomed to pressing, milling and cooking in order to prepare fruit for the long winter months and make delightful complements for farmhouse meals.

Farmers in Valle d'Aosta have always bred livestock, cows, a few goats or sheep, and grown a field of potatoes, a field of wheat or rye, a small vineyard and fruit trees. Today, agriculture is being rationalised, particularly with regards to apple orchards. The roads near Aosta are lined with tidy, recently planted orchards, which are replacing the older ones, with modern irrigation systems and machines for the various seasonal jobs. Preservation no longer consists of prolonged cooking or straw but these innovations have not changed the taste of local apples, still as exquisite as ever.

Other fruit, like cherries, peaches, apricots and plums, are grown near the houses: their products are intended for fresh consumption and for making jam. The early flowers of almonds trees herald spring. Almonds used to be milled into a sort of rough flour that was mixed with coffee to make a very energetic beverage called *mandolà*. Despite the lack of intensive farming of these trees, amazing sweet treats made following our traditional recipes can often be found at our farmer's markets.

Interesting fact:

the remarkably hard, compact wood of fruit trees was turned on lathes to make plates and bowls. In particular, pear tree wood, with its warm hues and attractive vein pattern, is still very prized today.



RUSSET APPLES from Valle d'Aosta

Farenolentse, breusca, plétaye, dousa, reyenta,

*tatchaye, repie*¹ : a wide range of Franco-Provençal

adjectives for apples is indicative of the importance

of this fruit in local culture. Apples are the most

common fruit in Valle d'Aosta, and russet apples are

the most popular.



The apple that epitomises Valle d'Aosta is beyond doubt the Canada Russet, with its fine, highly scented pulp and rough rusty-yellow skin. It is particularly suitable for making cakes, fritters and other specialities. It was introduced in Valle d'Aosta during the mid 19th century. The first trees were probably planted in 1877 in Gressan. Despite its rather slow dissemination, the Canada Russet started prevailing at the beginning of the 20th century when the local cultivars began losing their commercial value.

Cultivation and uses

Traditional techniques are used in orchards although new pruning methods which do not modify the particular features of the produce are allowed. Apples are harvested by hand from the beginning of September to mid November according to when they ripen.

After picking, the apples are selected and stored in fresh places, either natural (storerooms) or artificial (cold rooms), and in some cases sold to the local cooperative. In addition to be eaten fresh and used in cakes, apples are processed to make fruit juice and, more recently, cosmetic products. Russet apples and other varieties found in the region are the stars of the traditional *Fita di pomme* festival which has been staged since the 1970s in Gressan on the first Sunday of October. The festival originally was a simple display of the best fruit but today the interesting programme is much fuller. The village of Antey-Saint-André has its own celebrations of the autumn fruit *par excellence* called *MeleVallée* in which apples are displayed along with cakes and sweets.

Interesting fact

On *Ramouliva* or Palm Sunday it was customary to give juicy apples strung in bay laurel branches to children to have them blessed. It was then eaten by all the family on Easter day in the belief that the fruit would protect from the bite of vipers.

¹ floury, sour, wrinkled, rusty, spotted, apple from tree at rest



recipes

Sweet polenta and apples

INGREDIENTS

1 kg of russet apples, 2 glasses of dry red wine, 100 g of sugar, a few cloves, 1 glass of Kirsch, polenta, sugar, 1 tablespoon of cream.

Wash 1 kg of russet apples well, put in a pan and add 2 glasses of red wine, 100 g of sugar and a few cloves. Cook like normal baking apples adding 1 small glass of Kirsch just before they are done. Fry 10 slices of polenta in butter and sprinkle sugar on top. Serve the apples with the polenta hot.

From Ennio Célan, *Val d'Aosta in Bocca*. Ricetta annotata e cucinata da Delfina Lucianaz di Gressan, edizioni Gulliver 2000, p.161



TRADITIONAL

MARTIN SEC PEARS

A tasty cultivar perfect with wine or *focaccia* (whipped cream).

Small and pretty, with a whitish, scented pulp and a crinkled, rather hard skin that turns soft when cooked in wine. This is the famously resilient Martin Sec pear, a traditional varietal that had been partially abandoned. It has recently regained popularity with the production of jams that enhance its unique taste. Suitable for baking and poaching restaurants serve dishes that focus on its versatility. Martin Sec pears reach their prime twenty or thirty days after having been picked.

GOLDEN DELICIOUS APPLES

Dry summers, constant winds, little rainfall and high altitude:

these are the climatic features that make Valle d'Aosta particularly suitable for growing apples. Produce is of high quality and orchards do not require massive pest control treatments. This guarantees healthy fruit that can be eaten without concerns.

Golden Delicious apples are the most common and appreciated by consumers. The features of this cultivar are in its name: a golden yellow skin and a deliciously sweet pulp. With a high sugar content it is the favourite of children and ideal ingredient for cakes and tarts. The fruit is medium to large in size, with a slightly conical shape. Its yellow greenish skin turns bright yellow when ripe. The orange-pinkish hue of the part exposed to the sun is very important and characteristic of apples that grew on hills with a good exposure – like most of the orchards of the valley. Good exposure to sun also limits the problem of wrinkling of the skin, often found on apples which are grown on the plains. Mountain Golden Delicious apples are very aromatic and clearly superior to those grown elsewhere. Altitude enhances some particularities and confers a compact, crunchy texture as well as a special flavour. Other cultivars, in addition to the mentioned russet, include the very juicy, characteristically sweet-tart Red Delicious (Starking and Jonagold) deriving from the crossing of two different cultivars (Golden and Jonathan) with its unmistakable yellow and red striped skin and very crunchy texture and, the small, red, sweet and soft Gala.



recipes

Pears poached in wine

INGREDIENTS

1 kg of Martin Sec pears, one glass of red wine, 250 g sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves

Peel the pears, slice in half and put in a pan. Add a pinch of cinnamon, ground nutmeg and one or two cloves. Dissolve the sugar in a glass of local red wine and pour into the pan. Cook for 25 to 30 minutes and leave to cool. Arrange the pears in a plate or bowl and pour the liquid from the pan on top.

Recipe from *Les Bons Plats de Maître Barigoule – 60 recettes de la cuisine de la Vallée d'Aoste*, CTV, 1973

recipes

Chestnut cake

INGREDIENTS FOR 4

4 kg of dry chestnuts, 1 kg of flour, 50 g of butter, 50 g of honey, 120 g of sugar.

Cook the chestnuts, peel them and chop them carefully. Mix flour, sugar, honey and softened butter well. Add chestnuts and mix well. Pour into a cake tin with high edges and put into the oven. Bake for 20 - 30 minutes checking when it is cooked.

Recipe from *Les Bons Plats de Maître Barigoule - 60 recettes de la cuisine de la Vallée d'Aoste*, CTV, 1973

60



The importance of the chestnut tree

The highest concentration of chestnut trees in the entire region is found in the zone from Châtillon to Pont-Saint-Martin and at the beginning of Valle del Lys. In this area, chestnuts - dubbed "the bread of the poor" - ensured nourishment to many families, its flour being particularly rich in calories. Chestnut trees were grown with care until the end of the 1800s: decrees and edicts protected them from pilfering and lumbering was forbidden. The trees are often mentioned in deeds and property division documents, in wills, in donations and in contracts in general.

A large family?

Perloz, Lillianes, Fontainemore. These villages of the lower valley are known for different types of chestnuts and confusingly the same cultivars are known under different names. In general, the most important types found in the zone are: *ohèintche* (early and very tasty), *dounantche* (early and small, used in soups), *pioumbéze* (large and late), *yeyue* (rather big, very tasty, the second to last to ripen) and the *roussane* (reddish and large, the last to be harvested). Other types include the *groussère*, large and suitable for direct retail, and the large, high-quality *mourette*. Unique and today very rare are *bounot da prére* chestnuts, the shape of which is reminiscent of an old-fashioned three-cocked cap worn by priests.



CHESTNUTS

Chestnuts, the fruit that epitomises autumn: children have been learning poems about it, telling riddles about it and drawing it for ages. What is the reason for the great attention devoted to chestnuts? Generations of people from Valle d'Aosta who survived on chestnuts have the answer.

From harvest to flour

Harvest started at the beginning of September and continued well into November. Given the hilly terrain, the operation was not a straightforward one. Barriers were raised to stop the chestnuts from rolling out of the boundaries and skills were needed to keep one's balance while manoeuvring the long sticks needed to strike the highest branches. The first selection was made as soon as the burs were opened, either on site or at home: large and medium sized chestnuts were sold at the market while the smaller ones were dried in a *gra* in a well ventilated room of the house in which a low fire constantly burnt. The chestnuts were kept in this room for three to seven weeks. They were then beaten and selected: white and broken nuts were used for soups, those which kept their skin were used to accompany lard and cured meat while the very best were stored in benches for the winter. The rejects were sent out to be milled into flour.

Interesting fact

Chestnuts were a must on *Tousen*, All Saints' Day. They were eaten in the evening, roasted on an open fire outdoors or cooking in the kitchen, with cabbage or endive salad. Before going to bed, it was customary to leave a basket full of chestnuts and a bowl of milk or wine for deceased family members who during the night would come by and partake in the meal.



recipes

Motsetta with walnut oil

Arrange the thin slices of *motsetta* on a serving dish with the edges only slightly overlapping. Season with salt, pepper and lemon juice. Leave in stand in a cool place for at least 30 minutes. Drizzle walnut oil on top before serving.

From Aa. Vv. *Valle d'Aosta gastronomia*, edizioni Musumeci, 1993, pag. 75



WALNUTS and WALNUT OIL

Beautiful and majestic, walnuts are a characteristic feature of the landscape in Valle d'Aosta. Although today these trees are valued for their wood used for sculptures and fine furniture they were once grown above all for their nuts which were used to make oil.

A healthy fruit

Precious, with an unmistakable taste and difficult to find because nearly all grown for family consumption, walnuts are a genuine treat with cheese, honey and in cakes and salads. Munched on their own they are a good, healthy choice. Walnuts contain substances with complementary effects (namely alpha-Linolenic acid, an omega-3 unsaturated fatty acid) and a high content of antioxidants.

An energetic fruit

Walnuts have a high calorie content due their fat contents. The oil pressing process is complicated. Furthermore, a large amount of walnuts are needed to make one litre of oil. For this reason, oil production came virtually to a halt during the second half of the 1900s and is being rediscovered only recently. Walnut oil has a very special flavour and is particularly suitable for combination with local meat. The sector is experiencing a revival as a consequence of interest expressed in consumers.

The main steps

Walnut oil is made by cold pressing today, a technique which allows to maintain the typical flavour and taste of the original ingredient. In the past, a paste made by grinding the kernels was heated, mixed and crushed. The solid residue, called *troillet*, formed a brown slab. It was used as animal fodder but is very tasty particularly if a little sugar is added.

Walnut *veillà*

Many a legend was told cleaning while cracking walnuts. The villagers used to meet during the long winter evenings for a task that had to be done patiently by hand. Tongues were not occupied and stories were made up: a local legend has it that during such a walnut *veillà* the devil himself turned up in the form of a handsome young man to wreck havoc. He starting courting the girls, throwing the kernels under the table and putting the shells on top! At this point, a suspicious old lady decided to check out the charming stranger's feet to discover that he had a pair of hoofs instead. She understands what is going on and starts praying aloud. The devil was forced to leave without succeeding in his plan to ruin the oil.

Recipes

Walnut oil is the ingredient of many exciting recipes. It is suitable for dressing salad and enhances the aroma and flavour of dishes – raw meat, fish, grilled vegetables and delicate cheese.



HONEY

**While other productions
(vineyards, pastures, fields,
orchards) have left their
mark on the landscape, the
traces of honey are essentially
historical. The importance of
beekeeping is found in ancient
medieval documents.**

A leap into history

In the middle ages, beeswax used for lighting, was greatly prized. It was used for bartering and even had its own market. This results from documents of castle administrators and bailiffs, Conseil des Commis¹, Coutumier² and one of the first organised historiography attempts Historique di De Tillier³. Bee products were listed among the “assets to be administered” and beeswax was so important that one pound had the value of one sheep. This proves how beekeeping was widely practised certainly already in feudal times. Mention of apes orti (that is bee yards kept in hollow tree trunks near castles and consequently kept near vegetable gardens by farmers at the service of the local lord) is found in addition to semi-wild beehives in the woods controlled by humans. The archives of the Quart castle also make interesting reference to honey and bee swarms in addition to beeswax. Bee colonies in those times were marketed given the need of beekeepers to restore the number of hives after the bees were killed to collect honey and wax.

Rational beekeeping

During the 19th century alternative, less invasive methods for collecting honey and wax started to be devised. New hives were experimented and gradually perfected. They were disseminated by word of mouth and by the timely work of *Comice Agricole*. The new methods presented by beekeepers from Valle d'Aosta were awarded a great number of medals in the General Exhibition of 1899 in Torino. The practice of beekeeping continued into the 20th century, with the church heading the way: wax was certainly the key product but honey was equally interesting as *abbé* Henry, priest of the parish of Valpelline once declared. Nearly every parish of his valley had a hive and his fellow clergymen were known to invite guests, friends and relatives to sample their produce. It was *abbé* Henry who started taking detailed notes of the bonds between blooms and type of honey, becoming the first tourism promoter of this product.

¹ Historic institution (founded in 1536) by Assemblée Generale in response to the winds of war blowing across the Alps.

² First code on coutumes, i.e. norms applied as costumes.

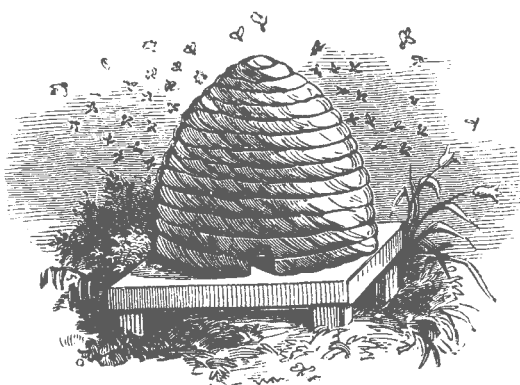
³ Local historian and politician, 1678-1744.

⁴ In the 19th century a beekeeper from Valle d'Aosta, named Alby from Issime in Valle di Gressoney, become famous for having built one of the first mobile comb hives, known as the Alby hive or Ducal hive. Alby'



HONEY

Valle d'Aosta has a great variety of flowers, distributed according to altitude and geographic area. It is this variety that allows the excellent honey production of the region. Our honeybees have access to expanses of perfumed, nectar-rich flower although for only a few months a year. Mountain territory and the climate of the region determine the quality and quantity of the various types of honey made. Today, there are three main types of honey. Quantities are scarce, particularly special honeys like that of rhododendrons, lime tree or dandelions. So when you find a jar of Valle d'Aosta honey remember not to dismiss the little vessel of gold. It is could be the last jar of a very exclusive production.



The players

Honey is made in the region by a local hybrid of honeybees whose genetic features have been established over time and who are particularly suited to thrive in the climate of Valle d'Aosta: these bees rest during the winter and develop during the spring, later but faster than the so-called Italian honeybee (*Apis mellifera ligustica*). They produce honey from spring-summer flowers, mainly using the nomadic technique, which consists in moving hives to difficult altitudes.

Energy and health

Honey mainly consists of simple sugar, glucose and fructose: glucose is directly absorbed by the organism and is energy ready for use. Fructose, on the other hand, is absorbed more slowly and is often called "reserve energy". Furthermore, the high concentration of sugar and acid pH of nectar confer antibacterial properties to honey, boosted by other components, such as polyphenol. For this reason, in traditional local medicine honey is used to soothe sores, burns, bruises and to treat colds and coughs. It is considered a cure-all for all illnesses and accidents.

RHODODENDRON HONEY (FRAMICLLO)

This is a very precious nectar: some years, when the weather is unfavourable, it may even not be available at all. This tiny treasure is made in hives positioned generally from 1600-2000 metres of altitude near woods and high mountain pastures where expanses of rhododendrons turn sunny prairies and slopes blood red. The flowers which bloom from mid-June to the end of the July provide an excellent clear honey which tends to finely crystallise assuming an nearly white colour in its natural state. It is delicate, light and without predominant scent. To the taste, it is balanced with a flowery, fruity flavour. It is dubbed "ice honey" by some local beekeepers because of its particularity of being produced at high altitudes.

recipes

Rhododendron honey is excellent spread on buttered rye bread slices.





WILDFLOWER HONEY (MOUNTAIN FLOWER HONEY)

The name says it all: a festival of scents and flavours. Polyfloral honey is made from nectar collected from different botanical species without any one being predominant. Wildflower honey is the main production of Valle d'Aosta in terms of amount and is rich in characterising nectar essences. Colour, flavour and perfume vary according to nectar sources and always different season after season even in the same location, further demonstration of the fact that the nectar gathered by the honeybees comes exclusively from the flowers of the woods and prairies of the valley.



DANDELION HONEY

Dandelions have a yellow flower which is highly prized by honeybees for its plentiful pollen and its sweet nectar secretions. This honey made on the lower and medium mountain slopes during spring. It crystallises spontaneously and very rapidly forming fine, regular crystals. It has a creamy, nearly buttery consistency, off-white or yellow in colour. Perfume is intense, characteristically reminiscent of the flower. Taste is sweet, sometimes with a tart touch, and the perfume has scents of camomile tea and fresh spices. Blooming and collection are conditioned by the typically variable spring weather and consequently dandelion honey can also be hard to come by.

LIME TREE HONEY

Another rarity: this honey is made in only a few areas of the valley, at an altitude from 600 to 1000 metres above sea level. It is made from a species of lime tree that grows spontaneously in the local woods. The minty taste and perfume of this honey is unmistakable. Very light amber in colour, sometimes with greenish or yellowish hues, the liquid honey turns from whitish or creamy when it crystallises. Its perfume has medium intensity, with a characteristic minty, balsamic scent that is reminiscent of lime tree herbal tea. It is normally sweet with a slightly tart finish. Scent is intense, fresh, minty, and herby.



recipes

Wildflower honey is excellent spread on rye bread slices with thin slices of white lard. Dandelion honey, on the other hand, combines well with local cured meats, particularly with *mozzarella*. Lime tree honey is the healthiest of all: its balsamic, minty scent makes it suitable for curing mouth and throat infections, in particular coughs, alone or with milk or grappa.



CHESTNUT HONEY (TSATAGNÌ)

This honey is collected throughout the lower-middle valley where chestnuts play an essential part in traditional culture. Chestnut honey is typically sweet with a bitter accent that characterises its complex, warm flavour. It crystallises slowly, maintaining liquid, viscous state for many months. The colour varies from light amber to dark amber. The scent of chestnut nectar is so intense that even small amounts can be identified in any type of honey. Monofloral chestnut honey has a very strong perfume with touches of wood and tannin.

OTHER HONEY: HONEYDEW

This is the result of a very special interaction between insects and plants: honeydew is secreted by some insects (aphides, scale insects etc.) which pierce the host plant drawing sap, consisting mainly of sugar and nitrogen-based substances. In order to survive, these parasites are forced to suck large amounts of sap. They withhold only the nitrogen-based substances they need and expel the liquid in excess, mainly containing sugar. Bees gather these sweet droplets which are formed on the plants. Honeydew is interesting because like flower nectar it mainly consists of sugar and honeybees can store large amounts of it in little time. The plants involved in this process in our region are mainly firs (white fir, red fir, pine) and deciduous plants, such as oak, chestnut and lime tree. Honeydew differs from traditional honey because of a higher contents of oligosaccharides and a greater percentage of mineral salts. The colour of honeydew spans from dark amber to black. It remains in liquid state for a long time and usually has a viscous consistency. The scent is of medium intensity, with vegetable/fruity nuances of preserves and cooked fruit. Taste is generally sweet sometimes with a salty, slightly stringent touch. Palate confirms aromatic notes of cooked fruit, fruit, molasses, and sometimes vegetables. Pure honeydew is difficult to obtain in Valle d'Aosta and often wildflower honey mixed with honeydew is found.



recipes

The intense, particular flavour of chestnut honey makes it ideal for combination with fresh goat cheese, which is a classic appetizer served in holiday farms specialised in goat milk processing. Honeydew is recommended for sports and intensive physical activities because like other honey it is made of simple sugar and has a higher percentage of oligosaccharides and mineral salts, indispensable elements for all athletes.



THE FAMILY VEGETABLE GARDEN

Lo courti

A courti, or vegetable garden, describes a clearly defined, delimited, fenced-off space that protects precious produce inside. In the past reserved to women, vegetable gardens have become more popular with men becoming a meeting place where to discuss gardening improvements, which are known to sometimes spark genuine competitions. In spring, after the sleepy winter months, home-grown vegetable enthusiasts are strongly motivated to start working over again and learn from past mistakes. An interest on the rise due to a strive to go back to basics, dictated by several reasons: the search for a more peaceful lifestyle different from today's, bound to the normal, slow pace of nature. It is no chance that by forcing one to slow down vegetable gardening is therapeutic.

A traditional vegetable garden is a patch of land of variable size next to the house in which a bit of everything is grown: potatoes, greens, herbs for seasoning and medicinal purposes, flowers and fruit trees. Produce is mostly for domestic use and this enhances the satisfaction of growing healthy produce for oneself without using chemicals.

For many enthusiasts today vegetable gardens are a hobby and a way to save money, while others have chosen to create new professions to integrate their income or even as a primary job. Local vegetable production and purchasing have developed an environment-friendly concept dubbed "zero kilometres" focused on high-quality, healthy products. This has led to a new enhancement of mountain zones creating farming methods which are compatible with the land and profitable at the same time. This thriving area of production has considerably boosted the farmed surfaces. Following the massive depopulation of mountain villages during the mid 20th century, we are observing today a slow but steady opposite flow, albeit for different reasons: today, the accent is on awareness and high-quality products.



POTATOES

Poisonous: that is what the savants of the past suspiciously claimed about the tuber from overseas.

Fears were put aside and farming became very widespread throughout our region. Specifically, potatoes have over time replaced and gained favour and because of the variety of possible uses: in their jackets, boiled, fried or accompanying other vegetables.

Some farmers have recently specialised in potato growing, which is not a simple matter because potatoes require constant water flow and average temperatures. Summers in the valley are warm and dry but interesting results are obtained by using the right methods and choosing the right cultivars for our soil (like Penelope, Kuroda and Collina) and highly prized mountain potatoes are put on the market. Our grandparents used to exchange baskets of apples grown in the lower valley for potatoes grown at high altitudes because already back then they were considered of better quality. In actual fact the taste changes although the nutritional value is basically the same.

BERRIES

The climate of the slopes of Valle d'Aosta are perfect for a wide range of products, including small fruits. Berries used not to be cultivated: blueberries, strawberries and raspberries grew wild and picked and eaten straight off the plant by shepherds while their livestock was out to pasture. Raspberries or blackcurrants complemented traditional vegetable garden produce: farmwives would make fruit salads and jam when they had time to go out berry picking. Recently, the growing of berries – more specifically raspberries, strawberries, currants (black, red and white), gooseberries, blackberries, blueberries – is becoming more widespread. These cultivations require considerable efforts and management skills but are suited to the more barren, difficult to access terrain. Berries are ideal for exploiting the unused or abandoned terraces of our region because they easily adapted to different soils and climates and because of the lower level of mechanisation they require. Produce can be sold fresh, in spirit or made into jam and served as accompaniment to sweets and cheeses, used in confectionary or to make jelly and fruit juice. There are many thriving businesses in the region making products such as raspberry vinegar and fruit syrup. Farmer's market goers and restaurant owners know who to go to for any given product. A well deserved award for those who have chosen a difficult career in farming surrounded by terraces, fruit processing workshops, machinery and old-fashioned recipes. Summer is a very intense season: picking is all concentrated between June and September (the blackberry season can span into October) and is a race against time. This is where organisation and management skills come into play. The berries ripen quickly and before they complete their cycle they must be dealt with either by selling them directly or making preserves. This is the real challenge.



OFFICIAL HERBS

Early leaves of special herbs were picked from the meadows in spring. Thyme, sorrel, nettles were used to make herbal tea or to season soups. These plants are found in vegetable gardens, where they grow spontaneously. Only recently have the many potentials of these herbs been discovered: for seasoning meat (Valle d'Aosta Lard d'Arnad DOP, Valle d'Aosta Jambon de bosses DOP) and cheese (Valle d'Aosta Fromadzo DOP), for preparing alcoholic beverages by seeping (for example the famous genepi), cakes, traditional herbal teas, kitchen seasoning and even cosmetics. Either soap or soup, success is on the rise and products are increasingly prized. Valle d'Aosta is home to over 40% of the plant species of Italy as a whole while the region amounts to only little more than 1% of the national territory. This remarkable variety is due to the particular climatic conditions of our valley, its soil and its many "micro climates": our skilful farmers apply their know-how and experiment, test, learn more and dare. This is why young families and producers are taking up this activity and are obtaining great results by combining innovation with deep-seated tradition and local nature.

VEGETABLES

There used not to be much choice and growing conditions were binding: vegetable patches were not very large and precious soil was used for growing grass because hay was more useful. Secondly, produce that was easy to preserve had to be preferred. Cellars were the natural refrigerators where carrots, leeks, cabbages, beetroots and onions were stored. Beans were removed from their pods and stored in benches or cloth bags. Today, Mediterranean products – such as tomatoes, bell peppers, eggplants, courgettes, fennels, chilly peppers, runner beans and melons – are grown alongside our traditional produce. Vegetable gardening can be a hobby or a way to save money, but today we are observing the creation of small vegetable farms that sell directly to the public (at farmer's markets or supermarkets). This is an expression of the increasingly more popular "zero kilometres" supply chain, in which direct relationship with consumers is sought for offering high-quality products. Markets sell the traditional our vegetables and those more recently introduced listed above. Once again, like for berries, organisation in summer is the key to growing plants and selling them to tourists, hotels and restaurants.



recipes

Repouta is a dish that is very hard to come by but the memory of which lasts on: cabbage leaves were boiled, dripped dry and then preserved in brine in a wooden bucket. A layer of cabbage was alternated to a layer of salt in the container and a stone was placed on top to keep it all pressed down well. During the winter, the leaves were picked from the bucket, fried and served with polenta.

From "Conserver le souvenir... se souvenir pour conserver" – catalogue of the exhibition at Maison de l'Alimentation, Introduction



WINE

Grape type, geographic zone

of origin, colour, vinification

method: a wine label is

brimming with interesting

information on the type of

product you are about to

drink. Valle d'Aosta is land

of mountain wine where

passion and biodiversity give

rise to unique products.

Nectar of the gods, cure-all, symbol of festivities, friendship, communion and ritual element. Millennia of history, planetary diffusion and democratic. What is the power of wine? What makes it so fascinating? It is the unique tinge or its perfume? Or the mystery of the wine-making process? Or is it further back, in the poetic atmosphere of vineyards and grape-growing in general? Everyone can answer according to their inclination. What is sure, one cannot remain untouched by this complex world, even more so Valle d'Aosta where over recent years cooperatives and individual farmers have invested in high quality production. Obviously, the focus in a small region such as ours cannot be on quantity. Small but rich, with a special microclimate and soil, wine production reaches levels of excellence in the region as demonstrated by the many awards obtained on national and European levels.

Notions of geography

Some call it "heroic wine-growing": most of the vineyards in Valle d'Aosta literally grip onto the slopes under overhanging rocks. Working in vineyards is consequently very tough for our vigneroni and traditional methods are still used.

The soil is very ancient, with crystalline and sedimentary rock outcrops. Slopes are steep and either old terraces are used or new ones are made. The wine-growing areas are mainly located in central valley along the Dora Baltea river, from Pont-Saint-Martin to Morgex.

Notions of history

The many of grape varieties found in Valle d'Aosta are the result of centuries of experiments, imports, daring chances and natural selection. Still today, our experts are committed to searching unique vines of which little or nothing is known in the most concealed corners of our region. We can certainly boast a rich presence of native varieties and a number of traditional varieties which have always been present (Pinot gris, Moscato bianco, Nebbiolo, Neyret). After the powdery mildew, peronospora and mite outbreaks at the end of the 19th century, local wine-growers turned to nearby Piemonte importing Barbera and Dolcetto, and to France, for Pinot noir, Gamay, Syrah and Chardonnay. Today, most wines are red. With regards to wine-growing, it is interesting to note that the upper and lower valley have preserved a more traditional landscape: the upper valley is home to low arbour wine cultivation with predominance of white grape variety (Prié), while high arbour cultivation is found in the lower valley with prevalence of Nebbiolo, the most classic variety from Piemonte.



A compass to find the way

Here are some useful definitions for finding your way through the long wine lists of restaurants in Valle d'Aosta.

The words

VALLE D'AOSTA DOC/DOP

or

VALLÉE D'AOSTE DOC/DOP

stand out on the label followed by

THE NAME OF PRODUCTION ZONE

(e.g. Donnas, Arnad-Montjovet, Torrette)

or

THE NAME OF THE GRAPE VARIETY

(e.g. Mayolet, Petite Arvine, Fumin etc.)

or

THE COLOUR (red, white or rosé).

Other information may be provided, such as

VENDEMMIA TARDIVA or **VENDANGE TARDIVE**

("late harvest")

for some white wines obtained by partial natural raisining on the wine

or

PASSITO or **FLÉTRI**

indicating white wine made from selected grapes which underwent a raisining process in suitable rooms,

or

SUPERIORE - SUPÉRIEUR, reserved to local wine with a relatively higher alcohol content with respect to the corresponding basic wine and longer aging.

Finally, the label shows **the producer**.

LOCAL DOC WINES

These wines are made in seven clearly defined subzones. The name of these local DOC wines is

Valle d'Aosta or Vallée d'Aoste followed by the name of the corresponding zone. The complete list follows. Some types depend on aging and sugar contents of the grapes ("Superiore" wine). Working our way up from the lower valley, specifically from Pont-Saint-Martin, a long series of strong-bodied reds, with a few white varieties, are found.





DONNAS

(zone: **Donnas, Perloz, Pont-Saint-Martin, Bard**)

Rocky slopes from which thin slithers of farming land are painstakingly torn: prized Donnas, dubbed the “mountain brother of Barolo”, is made from grapes grown on these terraces, predominantly Nebbiolo (at least 85%), locally known as Picotendro, meaning “tender skin”. Vinified as a red wine, with prolonged marc maceration, this wine is characterised by rather long aging (twenty-four months), of which at least ten in wooden vats (basic version). Supérieur is aged for longer, up to thirty months. The colour is pale ruby red with more or less intense garnet tinges according to vintage and aging. Perfume is fine, grapey, with rich, complex, ethereal nuances of spices, chocolate and toasted hazelnuts when aged. The palate is dry, velvety, harmonic with strong tannin finish. Excellent combined with game and red meat. Excellent with aged cheeses.

ARNAD-MONTJOVET

(zone: **Arnad, Hône, Verrès, Issogne, Challand-Saint-Victor, Champdepraz, Montjovet**)

Known for centuries, the popularity of this wine has grown over time. Dry palate with nuances of leather and spices. In accordance with the tradition according to which wine combines perfectly with the products of its own area, Arnad-Montjovet is the excellent accompaniment of Valle d'Aosta Lard d'Arnad DOP. It is also served with seasoned cheeses. This wine is made with Nebbiolo grapes in a lesser percentage than Donnas (“only” 70%). Its colour is pale ruby red with more or less evident garnet nuances according to vintage. Perfume is fine, intense, winy, with scents of red berries and spices when aged in wood. Taste is dry, smooth and harmonic with tannic notes on a slightly bitter base. The Supérieur version is obtained from low yield vineyards located in the heart of the area. This wine differs for its higher natural minimum alcohol contents and longer aging (twelve months).



CHAMBAVE and CHAMBAVE MOSCATO

(zone: **Chambave, Saint-Vincent, Châtillon, Pontey, Saint-Denis, Verrayes**)

Chambave is a dry wine and a good example of a typical Valle d'Aosta red. It is made from traditional Petit Rouge grapes (minimum 70%). Bright ruby red in colour, with purple nuances and an equally intense, persistent perfume with scents of flowers and berries. The palate is dry, full and harmonic. It combines well with local cured meat, soups and stews, especially with the very tasty *carbonada*. The **Supérieur** version is aged for at least eight months starting from December after vintage (the basic version is aged for five months).

Chambave Moscato and particularly its Passito version are appreciated by connoisseurs. Moscato white grapes are exclusively used to make this wine. Brilliant straw yellow colour, intense, aromatic perfume with scents of flowers and honey. Strong body, dry with a slightly bitter finish, it is excellent between meals and as an appetizer and combines well with shellfish and medium aged cheese. The high-quality, prized **Passito** version is made from white Moscato is raisined in special ventilated rooms away from the sun. Vinification only starts once the grapes have lost most of their water content and their sugary, aromatic features are enhanced. Golden, bright nuances and amber hues. It is recommended for making *zabaione*.

NUS and NUS MALVOISIE

(zone: **Nus, Verrayes, Fénis, Quart, Saint-Christophe, più Aosta per il Malvoisie**)

Made mainly from a local vine (40% Vien de Nus, with the addition of Petit Rouge), **Nus** is a pleasantly dry, harmonic wine from bright ruby red and nuances tending to garnet. The perfume is delicately intense, with discreet, pleasantly fruity finish. A dry, velvety wine, with warm alcoholic feel and elegant tannin notes. It is suitable for the entire meal and combines particularly well with *motsetta*, local salami and cured meat, Fontina and rye bread. The Supérieure version is aged for eight months. **Nus Malvoisie** is made with Malvoisie grapes, which are a local selection of Pinot Gris. The wine has a golden yellow colour with coppery nuances and an delicate, intense, persisting perfume with scents of fruit. Palate is dry, pleasant, harmonic and balanced. The **Passito** version is full-bodied wine made from the best grapes raisined in dark, ventilated rooms. Vinification consisting of slow fermentation followed by aging in small wooden barrels make this wine the gem of production in the region. Its colour is brightened up by amber nuances, while the basic perfume is enriched with notes of dry fruit and jam. Excellent sipping wine, it combines well with biscuits. The basic version is instead very versatile and combines well with appetisers, entrees and white meat.



TORRETTE

(zone: Quart, Saint-Christophe, Aosta, Sarre, Saint-Pierre, Charvensod, Gressan, Jovençon, Aymavilles, Villeneuve, Introd)

This is the Valle d'Aosta wine with the highest production. Its production zone is the largest of all DOC labels and covers eleven villages. It is made from Petit Rouge grapes (at least 70%), with the addition of other red grapes. It has a ruby red colour with mauve nuances, tending to garnet after longer ageing (like the **Supérieur** version).

The perfume is characterised by scents of wild roses and violets. Complexity is acquired and enriched with nuances of raspberry and spices after aging in wood. Flavour is dry, warm, velvety, bodied with a balanced tannin finish. Recommended for the entire meal, it is ideal with meat and excellent with roast and game. It combines well with local salami, cured meats and aged cheeses. As mentioned, the **Supérieur** version is aged for longer (eight months instead of the five of the basic version) and differs from the higher grape sugar content. Grapes come from the vineyards best with a low yield exposed to the sun.

ENFER D'ARVIER

(zone: Arvier)

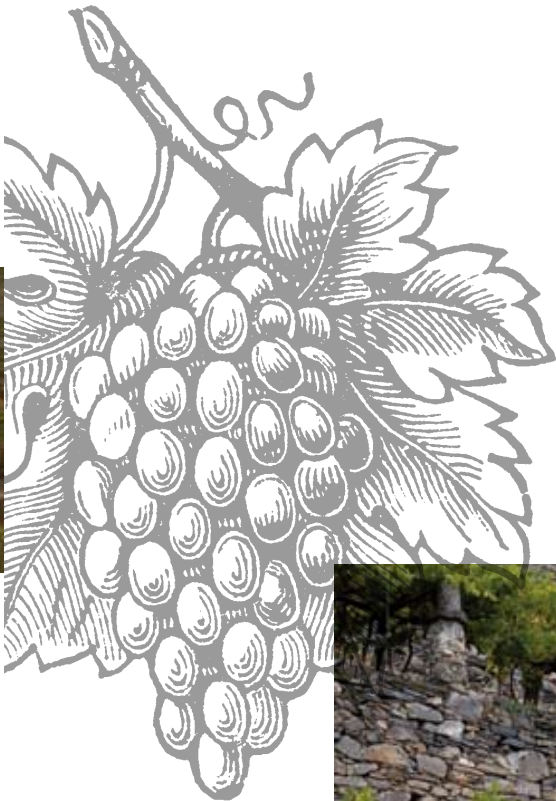
An evocative name that directly links to its zone of origin, that is the natural amphitheatre on the sunny slopes (*adret*) of Arvier, and is a good example of the so-called "heroic" wine-growing. The vineyards cling to the very sunny, rocky slopes hence the name *Enfer* (Hell), which automatically suggests high temperatures. The efforts of local vignerons creates a wine made predominantly with Petit Rouge grapes (at least 85%). Colour is ruby red tending to garnet with aging. The heat of the vineyards translates instead in a wine with a delicate perfume and a characteristic bouquet of wild rose and violet. Palate is dry, velvety and bodied with a slightly bitter finish. Ideal with red meat, roast and game, it combines well with typical soups and local cheeses. The **Supérieur** version is characterised by very prolonged aging (eight months).



BLANC DE MORGEX and DE LA SALLE

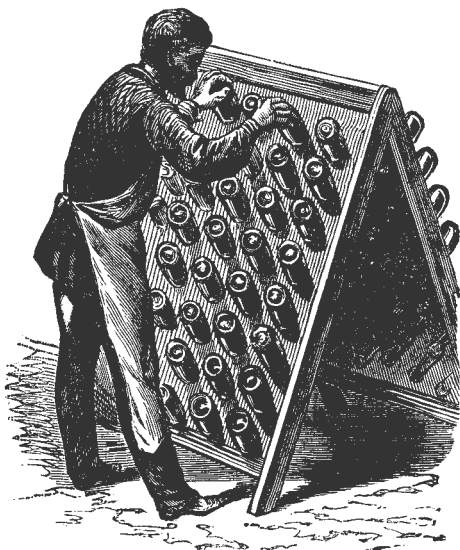
(zone : Morgex, La Salle)

At last, after this array of reds, we reach Mont Blanc and the white par excellence of Valle d'Aosta, Blanc de Morgex et de La Salle, exclusively made with Prié grape. It is native varietal that in addition to being used to make this unique wine is also a "garden white" of many other zones of the region. Each farmhouse had - and many case still has - a Prié grape arbour for the household table. Made from grapes growing in the highest vineyards of Europe and picked when ripe, this wine does not age well. Ungrafted vines are still used. The method is characterised by low arbours with traditional wood and stone supports. The colour of the wine is light yellow with greenish nuances. Its perfume is fine, delicate, fruity with hits of mountain herbs and hay. It has a dry, very delicate palate with fruity notes enhanced by freshness. Suitable as aperitif, it combines well with delicate appetisers and mountain trout. With its **late harvest**, this is one of the few "ice wines" in Italy and combines excellently with aged cheese and biscuits. A **classic method spumante** is made (three "extra" version brut - brut - demisec). This wine is suitable for the entire meal and delicate dishes. It is characterised by refined mineral notes obtained by aging in bottle of at least one year before final packaging.



VARIETAL DOC WINES

Native, traditional and international
varietals: these wines carry the Valle
d'Aosta denomination with indication of
the grape varietal which must be present in
proportional from at least 85% to 100%.



Native and traditional varietals.

Research is still underway focusing on geographic and, above all, history by browsing 19th century censuses, statistics and essays. The history of some varietals has been traced but in other cases, when names and production zones change, there is a certain degree of uncertainty. The long traditional of devoted vigneron provides sound information on some classic vines like the Petit Rouge, used for making Torrette, Chambave and Enfer d'Arvier and Prié, used for Blanc de Morgex and La Salle. Others are instead the focus of a recovery, promotion and dissemination campaign and are used exclusively for some wines (Furmin is an example of this). Most native vines are red. Prié is the only white.

National and international "adopted" vines

Classic, popular Chardonnay, Moscato Bianco, mentioned by the Romans, German Müller Thurgau, noble Pinot Noir and its variant Pinot Gris. Traminer Aromatico, aromatic by name and by nature, and Gamay. Young Gamaret, intense Syrah, prestigious Nebbiolo and Merlot. These are the main vines grown in Valle d'Aosta and used to make DOC wines carrying their same names. The varietals originate from other zones and even countries, near and far, like Piemonte, France, Germany. Some, like Moscato Bianco and Nebbiolo, are an integral part of the local wine-making culture and the base of some local wines, such as Chambave Muscat and Donnas. Others, like Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, are well adapted to the climate and type of soil of the mountain valleys and used to make interesting wines. They are international vines, known and appreciated worldwide: the basic features are the same but the influence of the mountain environment make them special. Perfume and taste have that "special touch", something that makes them unique, particularly when combined with the dishes of the local tradition. Interesting, most of the international DOC vines grown adopted in the valley are whites. Native and traditional wines are still present, predominant and appreciated for red wines.





MOSCATO BIANCO: a white with millennia of history

This white varietal is grown throughout Italy and is the fourth white wine in terms of cultivated vine surface. It corresponds to the French "Muscat blanc petit grains" and its name probably comes from the Latin word muscum, moss, the grapes being reminiscent of its scent. It has an intense, characteristic perfume. Palate is fine, delicate, aromatic. The **last harvest** version of Moscato bianco has a high alcohol content. The **Passito** version is yellow gold in colour tending to amber. It has an intense perfume and a sweet, aromatic taste. Ideal with sweets and desserts.



CHARDONNAY: a successful adoption

This is one of the international vines which is best adapted to the features of Valle d'Aosta. It is used to make young, fresh wines. It has a characteristic, intense, fruity perfume with nuances of green pepper and citrus peel. Palate is full and dry with nuances of vanilla and spices when aged in wood. A versatile wine, it is suitable for the entire meal: it may accompany according to its versions both the simplest and most elaborate dishes. The **late harvest** version originates complex, full-bodied white wine fermented and aged in wood. An excellent sipping wine which combines well with cakes and nuts or with seasoned and herb cheeses.

MÜLLER THURGAU: mountains given the best

Müller Thurgau is an aromatic vine, originally from Germany. It was created at the end of the 19th century by crossing Riesling and Chasselas. Suited for cold climates, it grows best in Valle d'Aosta from 600 and 800 metres of altitude. The differences of temperature which characterise the ripening period of these grapes enhance the formation of the typical elegant perfumes of this wine. Excellent as aperitif, it combines well with shellfish, fish and white meat with herbs. Drink chilled. The **late harvest** version combines perfectly with aged cheeses and biscuits.



PINOT GRIS : elegance in a fruit

The vine is a genetic mutation of Pinot Noir: it was one of the most fashionable wines of Italian production for many years. This increased its popularity in many regions opening the way to the production of great fruity, perfumed and well-bodied wines. Early to ripen, it gives good results when grown at high altitudes. It is suited to late vintage productions. It has an intense perfume, with nuances of fruit reminiscent of yellow peach and pear. The palate is dry, harmonic and sometimes characterised by a warm note and scents of fruit. Its alcohol content makes it ideal as aperitif. Combines well with fondue, cheese and fish appetisers. The **late harvest** version is ideal with aged cheeses and with cakes and dry fruit.

GEWÜRZ TRAMINER: the aromatic

This vine is mainly grown in Trentino Alto Adige and Friuli Venezia Giulia, but its features are also suited to the climate of the western Alps. It was probably originated from crossing wild vine varieties from central and central-eastern Europe. The colour of the wine made from these grapes is straw yellow. Slightly aromatic, fine, intense perfume sometimes with scent of roses. The palate is smooth and aromatic. The **late harvest** version as an alcohol content of 15°. The **Passito** version has precious colours golden hues with a sweet, warm taste.

PETITE ARVINE: mineral

Of the particular influence of climate and soil the case of Petite Arvine, a delicate white wine, is interesting. This vine is grown on sunny slopes favouring good ripening of this very late varietal. Perfume is fine, fruity with hints of exotic fruit. Its feature is saltiness to the palate that accompanies a feeling of warmth and harmony. It is ideal with appetisers, light snacks and white meat. Its full flavour make it perfect with many fish dishes. The **last harvest** version combines very well with aged cheese and herbal cheeses served with rye bread and honey. Excellent also as sipping wine





PINOT NOIR: the white and the red

This vine is the link between red and whites: vinification system including traditional “red” methods, possibly with aging in barriques, and “white” methods without maceration of skins, which provides elegant, well-bodied wines. The vine is originally from France (Borgogne) but it has been grown for many years in Valle d’Aosta. The colour in the case of **white** vinification is suggestive of the amber hues of onion skin.

The **red** version is pale red with cheery nuances. The perfume is intense and persistent, fruity, reminiscent of blackberries and cherries, sometimes with etheric hints of spices. It combines perfectly with *motsetta* and with red meat and cured meats in general.

CORNALIN: *broblanc*

This vine has been grown since times immemorial in the Valle and has been recently rediscovered. It is used to make wines with a strong personality. It is the local correspondent of Vallois Humagne Rouge, where it was introduced during the 1840s or more likely at the end of the 19th century. Although with a low number of plants, Cornalin is grown in a very large area of Valle d’Aosta spanning from Arnad to Arvier, on the right and, in part, on the left bank of the Dora Baltea, to an altitude of approximately 700 metres. It is particular common in the old vineyards of Aymavilles, where it is known as broblanc, suggestive of the particular colour of the plants. The wine is aged for at least five months starting from the month of December following vintage. Its perfume is intense, with characteristic spicy overtones that are accentuated by aging. Flavour is dry, velvety, warm with good structure and persistence. Recommended for the entire meal, it is ideal with meat and excellent with roast. It combines well with local cured meat and cheese.

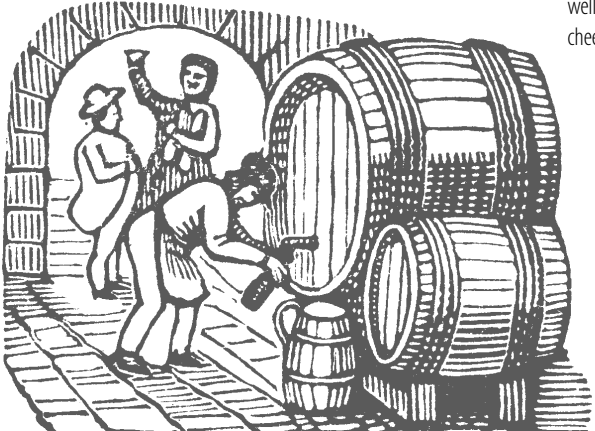
FUMIN: rediscovered success

This is a wine with pleasant nose, made from grapes that need a good exposure to the sun to express their maximum potential. This is a local wine-making gem, recently rediscovered and enhanced also by aging in wood followed by aging in bottle. Bright purple red with obvious violet nuances. The perfume is also intense, persistent, characterised by spice, vegetable notes which assume balsamic overtones. Generous, warm and smooth flavour. The elegance of its tannins make it velvety. Fumin combines well with red meat, civet and game, in general in addition to aged cheeses.



MAYOLET : la nobiltà della finezza???

An early vine that has always been present in the vineyards of Valle d’Aosta. Like Fumin it is one of the wine-making rediscoveries of the recent years and like Cornalin it occupies a vast cultivation zone despite the low number of plants. Fine, with a delicate taste and perfume, it can be served for the entire meal, like Petit Rouge, with cured meats, local soups, casse-croûte and meat.



GAMAY : il più versatile???

Originally from the French Beaujolais region, this vine is well distributed in Valle d’Aosta because of its yield and resilience. The wine is well-balanced with pleasant fragrance. Suitable for the whole meal, it combines well with local cured meat, soups and potages. Excellent with local beef.

manca traduzione titoli

GAMARET: the most recent introduction

Gamaret is a young vine, created in 1970 by crossing Gamay and Reichensteiner red grapes. Since its introduction, it has been reaping one success after the other because the grapes guarantee excellent ripening even at high altitudes. It combines well with cured meats, ham, soups, *polenta concia* (with cheese) and barbecued meat.



MERLOT: a versatile personality

The majestic vine of the French Bordeaux and is well suited to the cool, dry climate of Valle d'Aosta. It is used to make wines rich in colour and sweet in tannins. Taste is velvety, medium bodied, with good persistence and rich hues of berries and spices. A red wine suitable for the entire meal and well suited to accompany cured meat, meat and local cheeses. Drink at ambient temperature.

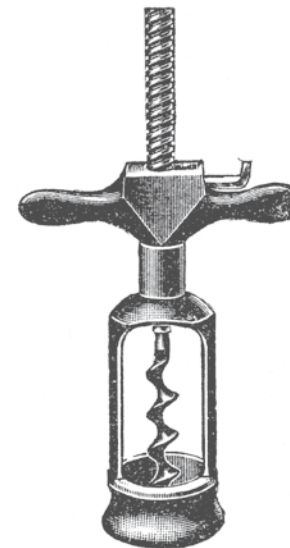
PETIT ROUGE: the king of the valley

This is the historical vine of Valle d'Aosta *par excellence*. It is the most grown in the region, from Saint-Vincent to Aoste, and its best expressions are found in Torrette and Enfer d'Arvier. It has a typical bright ruby red colour, sometimes with mauve reflexes. Intense perfume of wild rose and violets tending to almond when ripe. A good traditional wine that has been enjoyed by generations of people from Valle d'Aosta, from farmhouses to castles. It combines well with everything and can be served for the entire meal with cured meat, local soup, *casse-croûte* and meat.



NEBBIOLO: the lord of the Lower Valley

A constant presence in Valle d'Aosta, Nebbiolo is cultivated in zones spanning from Pont-Saint-Martin to Saint-Vincent and has its best expressions in the lower valley. Flavour is slightly almondy, well-bodied with a balanced tannin finish. It combines with red meat and medium aged cheeses. Drink at ambient temperature. Grapes are used for making DOC wine in the Donnas and Arnad-Montjovet areas.



PREMETTA: at the gates of the city of Aosta

This is an old vine, mainly found in the area around the city of Aosta. The wine is obtained from fermentation with maceration of skins for several days. It assumes orange nuances after moderate aging. Its normal colour has coral rose reflexes and rose petal scents when young along with fruity notes. Dry, fresh and pleasant taste.

It accompanies various local entrees: *Vapelenentse*, *Seupetta di Cogné* and other soups with vegetables and Fontina. Serve slightly chilled.

SYRAH : a delicate vine with a unique taste

Originally from the Rhone Valley in France, the vine is today found worldwide. With the right exposure and correctly managed it can produce great wines in Valle d'Aosta. It has a very intense, spicy perfume and sometimes, especially after aging, it may assume balsamic scents reminiscent of liquorice and ink. This wine is suited to be aged in wood barrels and combines perfectly with red meat in general and well aged cheeses.

VUILLERMIN: expanding popularity

This vine is being rediscovered by local vine-growers. Its area, originally limited to Chambave and Châtillon, are slowly expanding. It has a full, dry flavour with good tannin contents. It is recommended for cured meat and meat. Perfume is grapy and intense. Colour is red with purpose nuances.



GRAPPA

There are two options for grapes after harvesting: a long, delicate procedure to make vintage wines and a faster, more intense method to make grappa.

This spirit is made by distilling marc, that is the skins of grapes, after having separated it from must or wine.

Grappa production in Valle d'Aosta, like in other Alpine zones, is facilitated by climate. Great wine-making provides the ingredients, while low temperatures allow optimal marc storage before it can be distilled. Interestingly, distillation for family use is allowed in Valle d'Aosta and consequently many vigneroni are customised to use common stills. Family tradition is today supported by commercial production which expanded the range while respecting old-fashioned methods which confer a unique taste and genuineness to the spirits. The best distillation is a slow, delicate one: steam crosses the spongy marc mass extracting the volatile parts and aromatic substances are transferred to it. Pot stills are used to make grappa in Valle d'Aosta and are classified according to the type of contact with the heat:

- **direct fire**, this is the most ancient, traditional method and the most widespread. It is also the most delicate method because the boiler is placed directly on a furnace (generally wood or gas fired).
- **bain marie**: a boiler has a gap in which water or steam is introduced.
- **steam**: these stills consist of a series of small boilers into which the introduced steam is produced in an independent unit.

Grappa is excellent after a good meal, at ambient temperature or warm. It is often used to lace coffee and as ingredient of Valdostana coffee. An excellent combination for a sweet tooth is with dark chocolate.





SPIRITS



GENEPI

Genepi is a plant that grows spontaneously in the mountains at more than 2000 metres of altitude in cracks in the rocks, on moraines and on stony meadows. It belongs to the *Artemisia* genus which includes over 200 species of plants. It is aromatic and its digestive properties are well-known because of the famous liqueur.

The availability of the genepi herb is very limited because of the difficulty to access areas in which it grows. What is more, genepi is today classified as a protected species and therefore picking is limited and monitored.

Since the 1970s, following the problems related to picking spontaneously growing genepi and the need to supply the increasing demand of the herb by liqueur makers, some mountain farmers started growing genepi and have since acquired remarkable skills in a difficult cultivation that takes time and years of commitment. Cultivations are developed at low altitudes, mainly in Valle d'Aosta and Piemonte.

Of the many species of *Artemisia*, the most aromatic is the "Spicata", also known as "male genepi", smaller than "female genepi" (*Artemisia glaciensis*). The famous liqueur both at home using a few plants picked in high mountain or on industrial level with plants coming from farms.

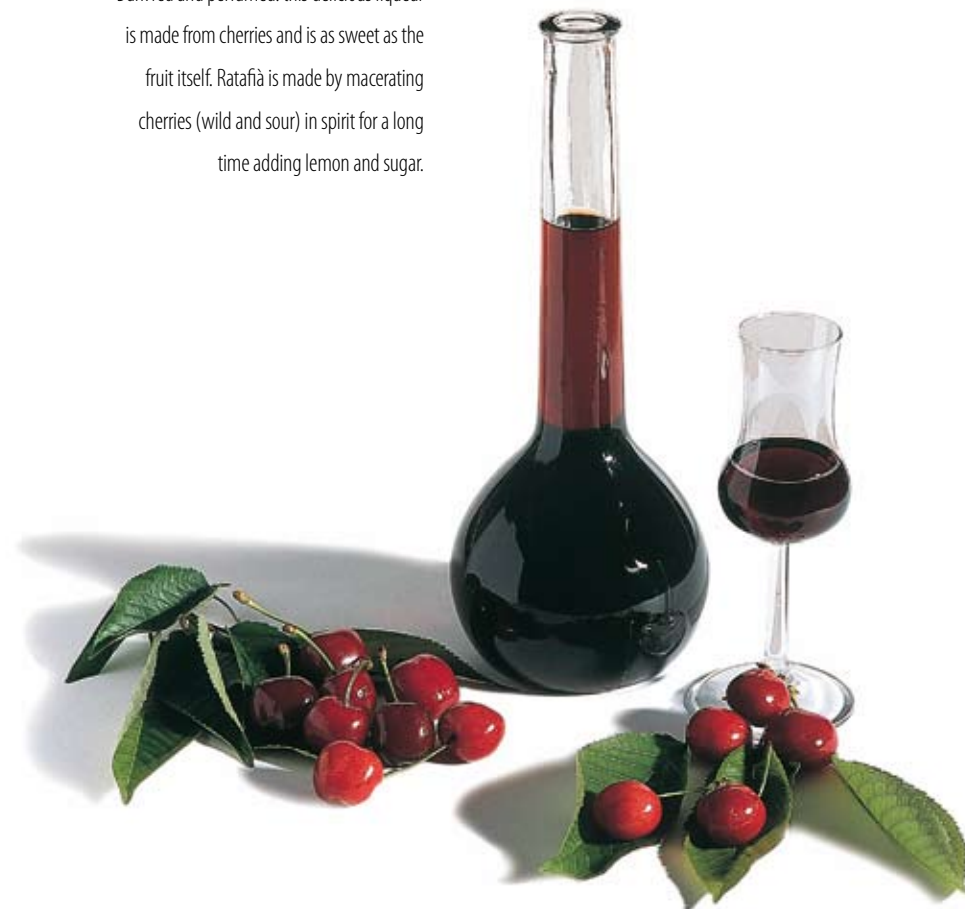
The gathered flowers must be dried, traditionally in ventilated rooms, for a fortnight. The dried plants are then placed in alcohol infusion for 30–40 days. After this, a water and sugar syrup is added and the mixture is left to stand. It is then filtered. The resulting liqueur has variable colour spanning from light green to amber, and an alcohol content from 30° to 40°. In addition to being drunk as digestive liqueur, genepi is used in cakes, sweets and chocolates.



RATAFIÀ

Dark red and perfumed: this delicious liqueur is made from cherries and is as sweet as the fruit itself. Ratafià is made by macerating cherries (wild and sour) in spirit for a long time adding lemon and sugar.

There are many types of ratafià: quince, apricot and rose. But the most popular and well-known version is made using wild and sour cherries. The origins of its name are controversial: what is sure is that this beverage was known and appreciated already in the 1800s. It was made by women and is still today considered a ladies' drink because of its delicate sweet flavour.



manca traduzione

**Assessorat à l'Agriculture et aux Ressources
naturelles????**

Assessorat aux Activités de production

Chambre Valdôtaine

Institut national pour le Commerce Etranger

(Istituto nazionale per il Commercio Estero)

Photos

Région Autonome Vallée d'Aoste Archives de l'Assessorat de
l'éducation et de la culture, Fonds Willien, Fonds Bérard, Fonds
Brocherel-Broggi, Archives de l'Assessorat à l'Agriculture et aux
Ressources naturelles, Paolo Rey

Textes

Marie Claire Chaberge,
Assessorat à l'Agriculture et aux Ressources naturelles

Réalisation graphique

Seghesio Grivon

Impression

Industrie Grafiche Musumeci