



SWEET AND SALTY

A Taste of Mugello

Ancient flavours and traditional cuisine
Local products and recipes by Chef Incrocci

www.mugellotoscana.it



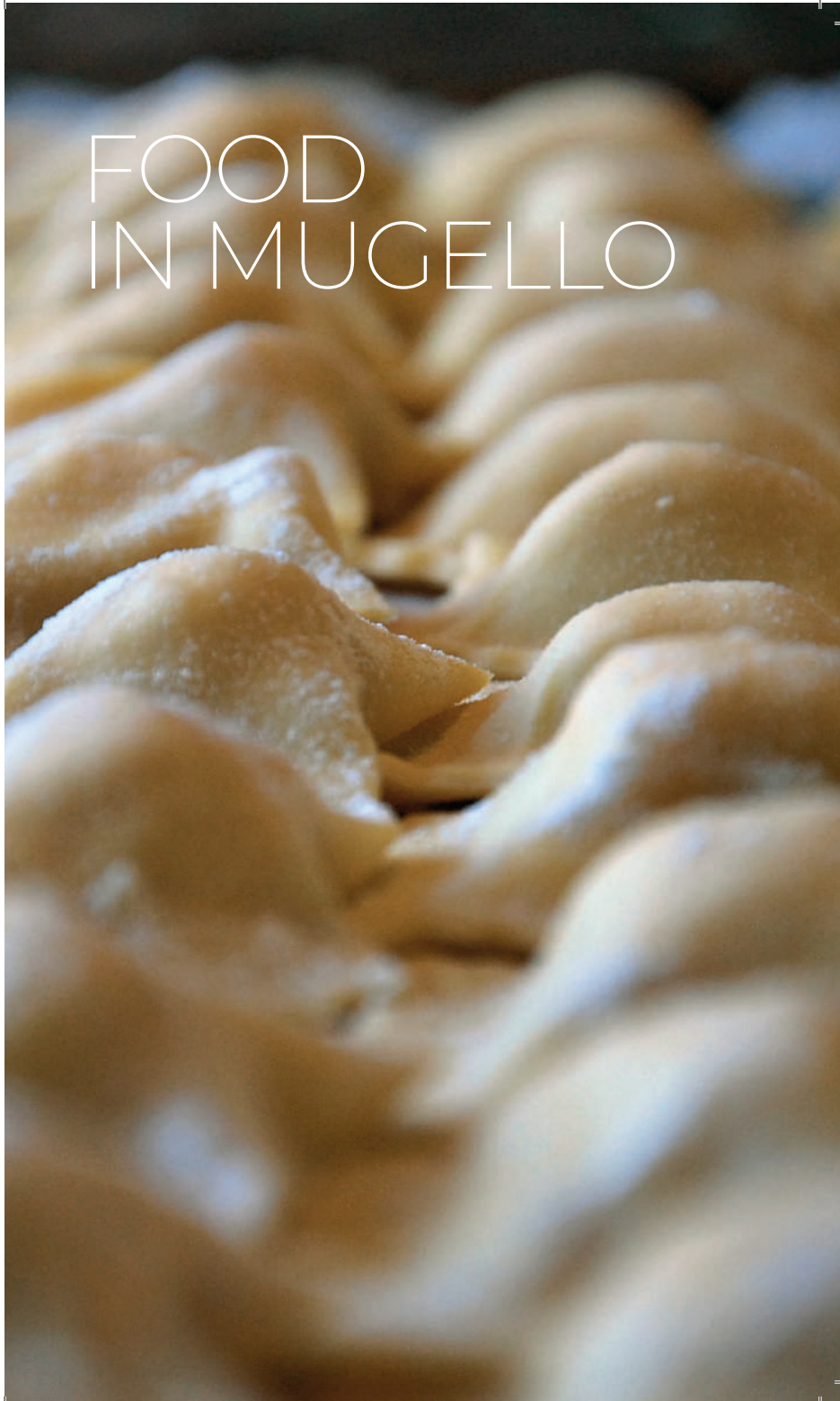
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FOOD IN MUGELLO



Since the Middle Ages, the Mugello territory has been known for its hospitality and excellent cuisine.

Once the roads were made safe to travel upon, every town and hamlet on the major thoroughways became a market town for the sale of agricultural produce and local crafts.

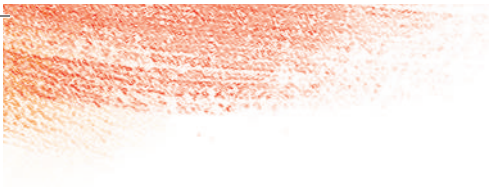
Numerous 'Albergatori' (hotel-keepers) offered overnight hospitality to both travellers and their beasts. These "albergatori" offered travellers a place to sit down and eat, to order wine, or to order meals, both frugal (soups or tripe) and substantial.

There were also 'Osterie' (inns) offering the same services, in more informal surroundings, and 'Taverne'

(taverns), which offered food and wine in abundance, but no lodgings.

These were all run in strict accordance with the laws (see 'Statuti dell'Arte degli Albergatori della città di Firenze e contado', The Statute of the Company of Hotel-keepers of the city of Florence and surroundings by L. Santini or 'L'Arte degli Albergatori a Firenze nel 1300', The Company of Hotel-keepers in Florence in the fourteenth century by A. Saporì) that regulated the relations between the different establishments, and those between the establishments and their clients with the aim of maintaining order and decorum.

It was, in fact, against the law to place tables outside on the street 'at a distance of more than two feet from the entrance'; it was forbidden to 'offer accommodations, food or drink or to buy or sell



.....or to call out, both loudly and softly, to sell wine, hay or other merchandise; and it was forbidden to show any wares to passers-by who needed accommodation....'

Very few dishes have been passed down to us from that distant past, but they are traditional Mugello dishes, and especially 'wholesome', because they are not contaminated by the richer ingredients so much in use today.

Travellers who appreciate wholesome, simple but tasty food are invited to come to Mugello, either travelling south from Bologna or north from Florence, to discover not only the magnificent

historical and architectural landmarks that are set against a backdrop of great natural beauty, but also the cuisine and the wealth of local products of this land, a land that has maintained the authenticity of its roots.

Mugello cuisine is profoundly linked to the city of Florence, and it is in perfect sync with modern-day life where wholesome, healthy meals are a must. So when visiting the castles, villas and churches that dot the countryside, or when spending the day trekking through the glorious woods, why not take the opportunity to stop for some wholesome food in one of the many restaurants along the way?

CUISINE IN THE LAND OF THE MEDICI

Mugello is a huge valley delimited north by the Apennine mountains, south by Mount Giovi and Mount Senario (which separate the area from the Florentine valley), and west by Mount Calvana, beyond which the province of Prato extends. Here we find the towns of Barberino di Mugello, Scarperia e San Piero, Borgo San Lorenzo, Vicchio, Dicomano and San Godenzo.

This valley was once extremely rich in game: deer, roe-deer, wild boar, hare, wild duck and geese occupied the wild countryside; the many rivers and streams were well-stocked with barbell, roach, eel, trout and prawns. The Ligurian Magelli, the Etruscans, and the Romans all had settlements here. After the Dark Ages, the Medieval families of the Guidi and the Ubaldini made Mugello their home.

After 1300 the area known as Mugello went through a period of rapid development, rural territories of the Florentine Republic. Morelli (1371-1444), a native of this land, thus wrote of the beauties and the produce of Mugello: "What you first see on the plains of the Mugello valley are the numerous orchards, where the harvest is carried out twice or thrice a year, and is always abundant. "And then, on the hillsides of these rich terrains, there is an abundance of wheat, fodder, fruit, and olive oil in abundance, and also wine, and great quantities of wood and chestnuts, and so much livestock that it could



feed one third of Florence. And then there are great quantities of cheese, and lambs wool, and numerous chickens, and other fowl and game in great abundance.”

The Medici family, and Lorenzo the Magnificent himself, have left numerous architectural traces of their dominance in Mugello (notably *VILLA CAFAGGIOLO* in Barberino, *TREBBIO CASTLE* in San Piero a Sieve, and *THE*

VICAR’S PALACE in Scarperia) but their presence can also be found in the agriculture, in the geometrical layout of the fields and woods, and in the rational canalization of the water.

In the fifteenth century, on their estate in *PANNA*, the Medici family established a cattle farm, breeding ‘Swiss’ cows (Alpine browns) to provide both for the family and for sale.

Today, after many centuries, Mugello has maintains this tradition, and many farms in the territory breed cattle, sheep, and also pigs: much of the cows’ milk produced here is distributed by the central dairy of Florence for its citizens.



MUGELLO CUISINE AND THE SEASONS

Although Mugello is isolated by mountains and woods, and has, for centuries, been a mere rural extension of Florence, it is a land that has borne numerous influences. On one side we find Florence with its history and seigneuries, and on the other side the nearby Romagna with its lords, not to mention the Medici court, with its profound Christian fervour. All these things have shaped not only the history and character of Mugello, but also the cuisine. There are obvious traces of these influences in the abundant use of meat, supplied to Florence from Mugello, or the first courses, similar to those of Romagna, much like recipes by the chef Pellegrino Artusi, who like this very valley, lived between Florence and Emilia-Romagna. And let us not forget the dishes that were imported by the Medici, whose international cooks, especially during the era of Caterina, created specialities to be served in banquets in Cafaggiolo Castle. These specialities were then, thanks to the local kitchen help, passed down to the local people, who prepared them using the only ingredients they had, ingredients that were fresh and abundant, season produce, which was not only tasty, but wholesome and nourishing: perfect after a hard work in the fields. Numerous holidays, both religious and secular, also inspired dishes that could make the feast days special ones, for example to honour a patron saint or to end a period of fasting.

WINTER

The lack of garden vegetables made it important to use dried goods during the winter months: wheat flour, corn flour, chestnut flour and of course the protein-rich beans.

FARINATA CON LE LEGHE also known as **FARINATA CON GLI ZOCCOLI** is a humble dish, a mash that uses an incredible, tasty amount of frost resistant produce. It is made with kale and leeks, together with beans and finely ground corn flour.





FARINATA CON LE LEGHE

Ingredients: One slice bacon, leeks, 1 garlic clove, 300 g kidney beans, 500 g corn flour, one kale leaf, vegetable broth, salt, pepper and oil

Boil the kale in salted water until soft. Cook kidney beans in a small amount of water. Finely chop the bacon, leeks and a clove of garlic. Stir fry in a deep pot with salt and pepper. Add water and the broth, the boiled beans, and the shredded kale. Now add the locally produced stone ground corn flour. Stir slowly with a wooden spoon until firm. After roughly 30 minutes serve the dish hot. If you leave the farinata to cool it can also be sliced and deep fried or grilled.

There are beans in the tasty tagliatelle soup which, if properly prepared, is among the best Tuscan dishes.

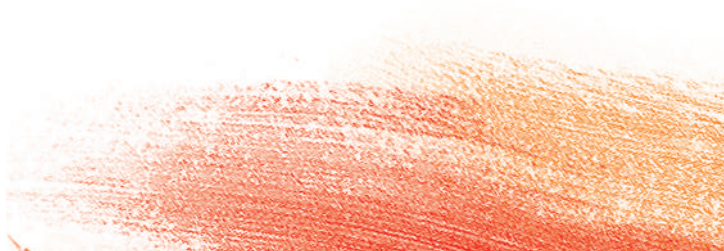




TAGLIATELLE AND BEANS

Ingredients: 500 grams of cooked beans, bacon in cubes, rosemary, garlic, 1 teaspoon of tomato paste, 200 g homemade egg tagliatelle

Stir fry the garlic, rosemary and bacon cubes in a pot. Blend the cooked beans with the broth, and add a touch of tomato paste, salt (a pinch because the beans were already salted) and pepper. If the sauce is too dense, add water. Cook the tagliatelli in the broth.





SPRING

When, with the coming of the warm weather, the hens start laying their eggs again, frittelle (fried egg batter dumplings) and omelettes made with vitalba and luppolo. For Easter and the Ascension, tradition calls for lamb and fried artichokes, and ravioli made with sheep's milk ricotta spiced with herbs from the fields,

like thyme, nipitella (acinos), radicchio and three-leaf clover. Now a national dish, **RAVIOLI** can be found almost anywhere. In origin, ravioli were called 'cappellone', and the filling was often made with sheep's milk ricotta and nettles, or parsley or borage, to replace the more expensive spinach or chard.





RAVIOLI AND HERBS

For the pasta dough: 600 grams of flour, 6 eggs, salt

For the filling: 500 grams of sheep's milk ricotta, 500 grams of tender chard or spinach, 1 egg, salt, pepper, nutmeg, 100 g grated parmesan cheese

Blend the flour, eggs and a pinch of salt into a fine stretchy dough. Trim and wash the chard or spinach, scald it in boiling, salted water, strain well and mince finely. Mix in the ricotta, egg, parmesan, salt, pepper and nutmeg. Roll out the dough with a rolling-pin until the dough is roughly 1 mm thick. Cut lengthwise into 10 cm wide strips and then use a spoon to set the filling along the strip of pasta (every 2–3 cm). Fold the pasta onto itself, covering the filling. Cut into shape with a pastry wheel. Pinch the ravioli closed for good measure. Cook the ravioli in abundant, boiling, salted water: serve with butter and sage, tomato sauce, minced meat sauce, minced sausage sauce, or mushroom sauce.

Late spring, numerous food fairs are held throughout the Mugello valley. In every town, you can find the most classical of Mugello dishes: TORTELLO DI PATATE, potato filled ravioli. This dish finds its origins in Mugello, and is the product of local genius. It is, in fact, made with simple yet “regal” ingredients: potatoes, eggs and flour. White potatoes, grown mostly in Firenzuola, Upper Mugello, are perfect for this recipe.



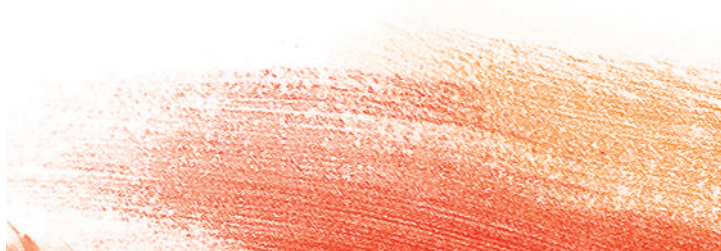
TORTELLI DI PATATE

For the pasta dough: 500 grams of flour, 5 eggs, pinch of salt

For the filling: 1 kilo of potatoes, garlic, parsley, salt, pepper, nutmeg

Boil the potatoes with the skins, peel and mash finely while still warm. Add nutmeg, salt and pepper, and mix in stir fried garlic and parsley.

Prepare the pasta dough (see ravioli recipe) using flour, eggs and salt. Make small spoon sized balls of filling and distribute them along the strip of pasta at a distance of 3–5 cm. Fold the past onto itself. Cut to shape with the pastry wheel, and pinch shut so that the filling stays in place during cooking. Serve with minced meat sauce (excellent with rabbit or duck), or mushroom sauce.





SUMMER

Ducks and geese made their way onto Mugello tables during the summer, victims of the corn harvest when the fields were laid bare. Today it is still possible to enjoy boiled duck, or other tasty dishes made with chicken and capon, or tasty stuffed rabbit, in restaurants in the area.





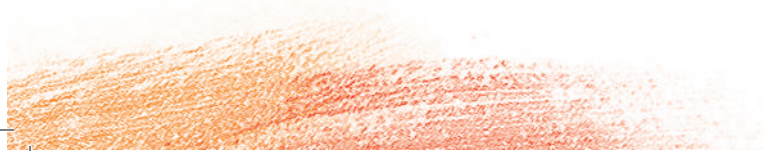
STUFFED RABBIT

Ingredients: 1 rabbit, 2-3 slices of ham, 2-3 slices of mortadella, 5 eggs, parsley, garlic, rosemary, parmesan, salt and pepper

Cut open and de-bone a medium sized rabbit. Prepare a chopped garlic, parsley, salt and pepper mix to spread inside the rabbit. Make an omelette with 5 eggs, a tuft of chopped parsley, $\frac{1}{2}$ a clove of garlic and grated parmesan. Layer the inside of the rabbit with slices of ham, mortadella and omelette, and sew closed. Place the rabbit and some extra virgin olive oil in a pot and cook for 90 minutes. The slices of rabbit can be served with chopped white porcini mushrooms.

The hottest time of the year is a time when the vegetable garden is most abundant. In this period, Mugello dishes include a variety of mixed salads, raw vegetables in 'pinzimonio' (extra virgin olive oil, salt and lemon dip), and, above all, zucchini, eggplant, green tomatoes, etc., all fried in a light batter made from flour and water.

One dish that was passed down to us from the Middle Ages, and which continues to be present on Mugello tables, both at home and in restaurants, is the PANZANELLA: a salad of bread, ripe, tasty tomatoes and rich green basil that only the summer sun can provide.

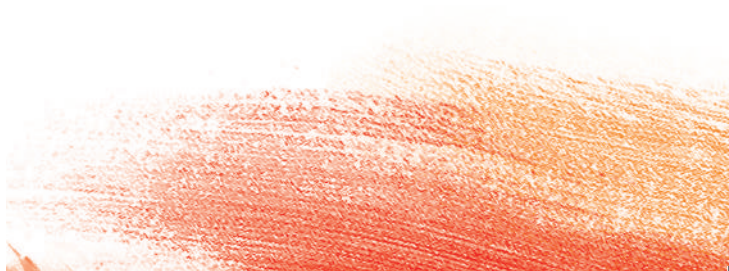




PANZANELLA

Ingredients: dry Tuscan bread, 1 red onion, 2 ripe tomatoes, 1 cucumber, 1 stick of celery, basil leaves, oil, vinegar, salt and pepper

Soak the dry bread in water. When it has sucked up the water, strain it and break it into small pieces in a salad bowl. Add onion, tomato, cucumber, and celery in cubes or in slices, and numerous basil leaves. Dress with Mugello or Tuscan extra virgin olive oil, vinegar, salt and pepper.





AUTUMN

With autumn comes both chestnut and hunting season. Chestnuts can be enjoyed boiled (ballotte) and roasted (bruciate). Wild fowl can be prepared in the oven, wild hare can be stewed, and roe deer and wild boar (of which the Mugello countryside is now highly populated) can be cooked in a number of delicious ways.





WILD BOAR STEW

Ingredients: 1 wild boar loin, 1 glass of red wine, celery, parsley, onion, a kernel of butter, 1 tablespoon of tomato paste

Take the boar loin and cut it into pieces. Soak it for a few hours in water, salt, wine, onion, celery, and parsley. Replace the vegetables once during the soaking. Put the pieces, unrinsed, in a pot and cook slowly until the water has evaporated. Stir fry the vegetables and spices in butter in another pot. Add the tomato paste and the wild boar. Continue to cook on low heat (do not cover the pot). The meat can be minced and the sauce placed over pappardelle pasta.

Next comes pork season, and that means abundant meals, feasts with spareribs and dishes covered in mushrooms and sprinkled with Mugello truffles – not as renowned as the truffles from other parts of Italy, but, as experts agree, particularly tasty. Numerous recipes employ savoury cabbage, which the freezing weather makes “tender”, for example the delicious crostoni with kale and “new” extra virgin olive oil.





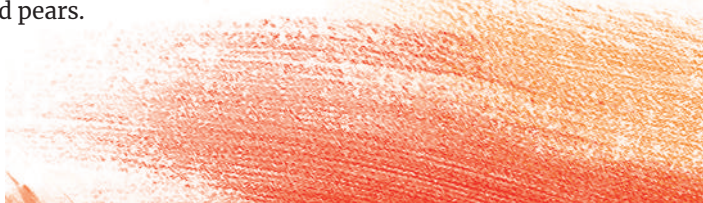
CROSTONI DI CAVOLO NERO

Ingredients: woodstove baked Tuscan bread, kale leaves, cloves of garlic, salt, pepper, Tuscan or Mugello extra virgin olive oil

Rinse the kale and cook it in abundant water, drain and squeeze. Place the cooked shredded kale on slices of toasted bread that have been rubbed with garlic cloves and sprinkled with vegetable broth. Add a dab of extra-virgin olive oil, salt and pepper.

The cold weather is a perfect time to enjoy hot meals and vegetable soups, and in particular the RIBOLLITA. And at Christmas time, in families but also restaurants, cooks, both amateur and professional, prepare delicious pasta for capelletti, pickled mushrooms in vegetable oil, and pickled onions in red wine vinegar, crostini with chicken liver and spleen pate, capon, roast pork loin, roast potatoes, roast mix, biscuits with sweet Vin Santo, and to top it off, the famous “GEMMA D’ABETE”, a liquor prepared by the Monks of Monte Senario (based on the original recipe by Father Martini of Sant’Agata del Mugello).

Mugello cuisine, in fact, is made of simple flavours, unelaborate dishes that employ poor but genuine products: bread, oil, fowl, and livestock from the pasture, vegetables from the garden, and very few spices; for example, almost no-one uses hot chili peppers, which is called zenzero (ginger) here, but everyone uses a touch of pepper and nutmeg. And then, of course, there are also the marrone chestnuts, corn flour, wild game, peaches and pears.





UPPER MUGELLO

The territory of the Unione Montana which stretches towards Romagna is where both natural resources and social traditions have been preserved with the greatest attention.

Here the ruggedness of the mountain crests is softened by the presence of the towns of Marradi, Palazzuolo sul Senio, Firenzuola and San Godenzo.

The huge boulders and peaks, although only just over 1000 metres above sea level, form a backdrop and skyline which is more often than not, impressive. On the roads that lead to Romagna from Tuscany – over the numerous mountain passes (Faentina, Bolognese, Imola, and Muraglione) the view is dominated by uncontaminated woods of beech, chestnut and oak, and of huge meadows dotted with the occasional juniper bush and rocky outcrop. The people living here have, for

many centuries, obtained their food in the woods.

The farmers gave special attention to their chestnuts groves. They spent much of their time in “smacchiatura” (removing dried branches), clearing the brush from under the trees, preparing “parate” (mounds of leaves that would stop the chestnuts from rolling too far), harvesting the chestnut, and later drying it. Nothing that came from the chestnut woods was wasted: the few chestnuts remaining on the ground, or the ones discarded because worm-ridden, were, for example, fed to the pigs.

The chestnuts of Mugello, after many centuries of careful selection, have reached a high level of excellence, unique not only in Italy, but world-wide. For numerous years now, in the greater part of Mugello, farmers have been harvesting the **MARRONE DEL MUGELLO I.G.P.** (Protected Designation of Origin, CEE regulation 2081/92, which safeguards the specific



qualities of the chestnut, and prohibits the use of fertilizers and phytopharmaceuticals of synthesis).

All Mugello “Marrone” chestnuts are evenly coloured, medium/large, elliptical, slightly flat, and with a fine pulp that is particularly sweet, compared to regular chestnuts, which are variable in shape, size and colour.

The cultivation of chestnut trees, in particular in the small villages of the Upper Mugello, has always been a precious source of sustenance, so much to call the chestnut tree the “bread tree”. In fact until the Second World War, the chestnut and its flour have been one of the main foods in the diet of the local population. Nowadays the use is completely different. It is a refined and precious ingredient for traditional and innovative recipes. Marradi boasts a great recipes

heritage.

Particular recipes using marroni chestnuts, cooked both fresh and dry (white chestnuts) have been passed down in Marradi for centuries. Many dishes of the lower lying territories, which made use of wheat or maize flour, are made in Marradi with chestnut flour instead.

The typical “pattona” (a sort of polenta made with chestnut flour) was prepared every 10–15 days, and, once it solidified, was eaten sliced, like bread either on its own, or with milk, or fresh sheep’s cream cheese, toasted or fried. For this reason the chestnut tree was known as the ‘bread tree’.

Referring back to “A trip through the sweet Mugello territory”, and the use of the marrone chestnut in cakes and other sweets. The marrone was and is used to prepare a particular dish that many restaurants continue to offer, **TORTELLI DI MARRONI.**



TORTELLI DI MARRONI

For the pasta dough: 11kg flour, 12 eggs

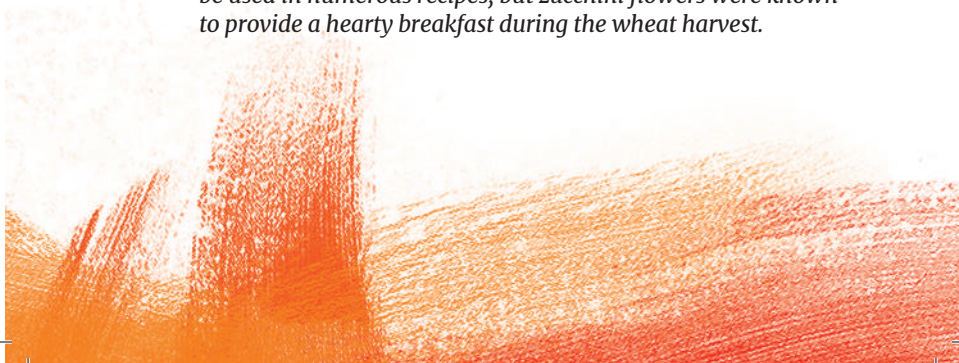
For the filling: 1kg marroni chestnuts, 500 g sheep's milk ricotta, 20 walnut kernels, salt, nutmeg and pepper, Vin Santo, laurel leaves, and wild fennel seeds

Prepare the pasta dough by mixing the flour, eggs and a pinch of salt. Work the dough until it's stretchy. Boil the marroni in abundant salted water with laurel leaves and wild fennel seeds. Peel the chestnuts and mash them. Add the ricotta cheese, the ground, lightly pan-roasted walnut kernels, 2 tablespoons of Vin Santo, salt, pepper, and grated nutmeg. Leave to rest.

Roll out the pasta dough into thin strips (see ravioli recipe) and place the filling at even intervals, fold the pasta, cut into ravioli squares. Pinch the borders with a fork to keep the filling from spilling out, and cook in abundant salted water.

Serve the tortelli hot with a thread of fine extra virgin olive oil and freshly ground black pepper, or butter and parmesan cheese.

Together with the woodland products, the Marradi cuisine makes great use of garden vegetables. Not only could zucchini be used in numerous recipes, but zucchini flowers were known to provide a hearty breakfast during the wheat harvest.





ZUCCHINI FLOWERS WITH FILLING – AKA “FICHI”

Ingredients: Zucchini flowers, opened (remove pistils), 300 grams ricotta cheese, finely chopped parsley and garlic, 100 grams of parmesan cheese, 2 egg yolks

Mix the parsley, garlic, parmesan, ricotta and egg yolks for the filling. Fill the flowers. Close gently, flour and then roll in batter (egg, flour and water). Deep fry.

They can be eaten as is, or cooked in tomato sauce made from ripe tomatoes, garlic and parsley.

For centuries the people of these mountains have gathered the products of the woodland: berries and herbs. These products were always a part of farmers' daily meals. In Palazzuolo sul Senio, this tradition was never abandoned: the products that grow wild in nature continue to be an important part of the local cuisine.

In Palazzuolo sul Senio, you can buy lemon balm, blackberry, raspberry, prugnolo (St. George's mushroom), sage, juniper, apple, and mint grappa; rosemary, nocino, basil, laurel liquors, and many more; chestnut, raspberry, elderberry, and mint jam; raspberry, elderberry, and blackberry syrup; dog-rose tea; as well as acacia, wildflower, and chestnut honey.

Sundays in autumn are dedicated to Palazzuolo's many local products: the I.G.P. Mugello Marrone, walnuts, hazel-nuts, medlars, organic apples and pears grown from ancient tree varieties, spelt, but also cow and sheep cheese.

MUGELLO COWS' MILK RAVIGGIOLO is a typical product of Palazzuolo. It is the perfect filling for cappelletti, which are eaten in broth, and are the typical Christmas dish in Upper Mugello.





CAPPELLETTI

For the pasta dough: 400 grams flour, 3 eggs

For the filling: 300 g Ravaggiolo or stracchino cheese,
100 g grated parmesan cheese, 3 skinless bitter
almonds, nutmeg or cinnamon, 1 egg, salt

Place the ingredients for the filling in a bowl and blend well. To keep the filling from being too liquidy, add grated parmesan to measure. Prepare the pasta dough (see ravioli) and cut into 3–4 cm. squares. Place $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of filling on each square. Unite the opposite corners to form a triangle. Pinch closed to form a cappello (cap). Join the ends leaving a small hole in the middle. Cook in abundant beef, capon or chicken broth.

During the Christmas season, when broth was an easy thing to come by, sometimes passatelli were made. This ancient Mugello dish is even mentioned in the famous cook book by Artusi. To make passatelli it is necessary to have the right kitchen utensil (a metal sheet with holes through which the dough is passed) which can easily be found in open markets throughout Upper Mugello, and in the area of Romagna. In alternative, a potato sieve will do.





PASSATELLI

Ingredients: 4 eggs, 200 g bread crumbs, 100g grated parmesan, a pinch of nutmeg

Mix the ingredients together until the dough is compact. Place it in the potato masher and make strings of passatelli as desired. Cook them in broth. When the passatelli come to the surface, they're ready to eat.

*A special product of the land, discovered only in the past 10 years, and of great gastronomic value, is the **MUSHROOM**. In the age-old chestnut woods and the stretches of pole-timber forests, we can find the tasty porcino mushroom (boletus), and "in the green fields, in spring, when the snow has melted and the sun is hot, another treasure sprouts, it is the prugnolo (St. George's mushroom...)", Tebaldo Lorini "Il Mugello in cucina". This mushroom, with a defined yet delicate taste, is unknown to most, but highly appreciated and hunted out in Firenzuola, where it has always been used to create sauces for refined dishes and crostini. In Firenzuola at the end of May, we can also enjoy a splendid food festival dedicated to the **PRUGNOLO** mushroom.*

*For the past few years, many farms in Firenzuola have become **ORGANIC FARMS**: along with the traditional products of the land, the white and yellow potatoes, and the chestnuts, we now find **SPELT**. This **ORGANIC SPELT** can be used in the kitchen in grains to make tasty cold salads, or served in minestrone soup. Spelt flour can also be used to make pasta (spaghetti, penne, etc.). It can be served with simple sauces, ricotta and truffles, strips of prosciutto etc., and the flour can be used to make homemade tagliatelle or pizza. Puffed spelt is perfect at breakfast with milk.*



SPELT SALAD

Ingredients: 400 grams spelt, cherry tomatoes, 'Grana' cheese, fresh onions, black stoned olives, capers, oregano, hot pepper, salt, basil, extra virgin olive oil

Cook the spelt in salted boiling water. Cool it under running water. Add all the other ingredients, which have been previously prepared. Serve with a trickle of extra virgin olive oil and basil leaves. Spelt salad can be served with fish. Try it with tuna, shrimp, tiny octopus, etc.

In Firenzuola, a land which was acquired by Florence in the 14th century, cattle raising is a fundamental part of local farming. The Brown breed, strong and resilient, is a favourite of these parts. Selected and controlled, it produces huge quantities of milk and, thanks to the aromatic, uncontaminated pastures, produces, as do numerous other strictly controlled breeds, excellent BEEF, which can be bought in local butchers' shops throughout the area or directly from the breeders.

The woods and meadows of Firenzuola are the perfect habitat for roe deer, deer and wild boar. You can taste this tasty game in MOSCHETA ABBEY, in the Giogo-Casaglia Forest complex, and in numerous restaurants in the area.

The FORALOSSI WATER MILL, in Firenzuola, still stone grinds the non-GMO wheat harvested on the farms in Mugello. The flour is rich in wheat germ, fibres, minerals, vitamins, and amino acids, all indispensable for a healthy diet. This flour is used to make PANE DEL MUGELLO (Mugello Bread), a Tuscan, almost completely unsalted, bread made in "filoni" long loaves that can weigh ½ a kilo, 1 kilo or 2 kilos, and which are completely Mugello-made.



A TRIP THROUGH THE SWEET MUGELLO TERRITORY

There are numerous pastry shops and bakeries in Mugello that produce excellent quality sweets. They are very often family run business with years of tradition and know-how. These welcoming pastry shops and bakeries offer recipes that have been passed down for ages and which use traditional ingredients that recall a distant past or new creations that creatively re-elaborate and enrich successes of the past.

This is a special invitation – especially for those of you with a sweet-tooth – to visit Upper Mugello and enjoy the traditional sweets of the territory made with chestnuts, or the pies, cantucci (almond cookies) biscuits, frittelle (fried sweets), custards, millefoglie or the rare and refined Renaissance cakes. The following chapter briefly describes the history of our local, traditional sweets.

SWEETS OF TRADITION

Like with “salty” foods, home cooks in Mugello employed great skill and only season produce for the preparation of sweets. Eggs, flour, milk, butter, chestnuts, honey, grapes, and fruit were almost always found in the kitchen; and sweets meant feasts and especially something new, an addition to the normal everyday meals, and a pleasant change.

Almost all the farmers in the area had a wood burning oven where, after the bread was cooked and the oven had cooled a bit, they could make delicious cakes for breakfast and snack time during the long working day.

Until shortly after the war, town feasts, especially religious ones, but also those linked to the festive carnival



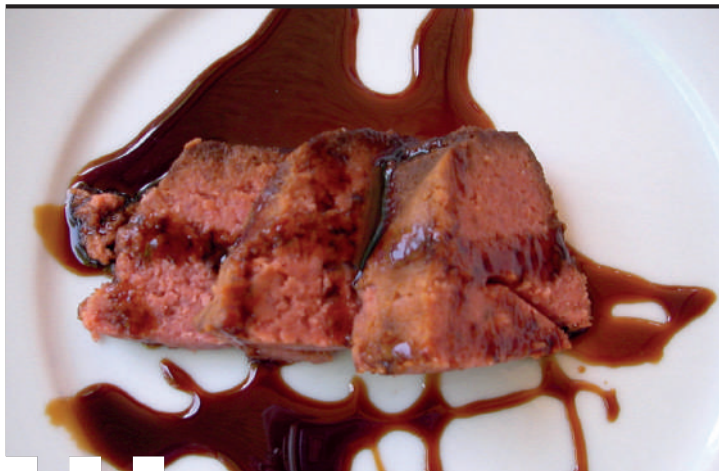
season and the harvest, gave home cooks a chance to compete for the best homemade sweets. Sweets were offered at the end of Mass, and it was more often than not a way for young women to meet single men.

The season was extremely important: grape harvest, for example, ended with “*schacciata all’uva*” grapes on sweet bread, which was both a hearty snack for the men working the vines, and propitiatory. Winter was a time for chestnuts, especially on the Apennines. Easily preserved, this fruit was used directly – being sweet in themselves, they did not need the addition of sugar – or, once dried, as flour for the making of delicious recipes. Spring brought with it fruit that was perfect for making pies, biscuits, and rice cakes. Summer was a time when milk and eggs could be found in abundance and, given the resourcefulness of the cooks,

were used to prepare custards and creams that were both fresh and nutritional.

Except, of course, for the presentation and the quantity, the production of sweets saw a lessening in the gap between the rich and the poor: lords and farmers all loved and enjoyed their sweets. An example of this can be found in the famous *Torta in balconata* (Balcony cake), which has only recently been rediscovered, and is probably the sweet that is most closely linked to the territory: the original recipe, created in the Medici family kitchens, calls for numerous spices, dried and candied fruit, and nuts, but a less elaborate version could be found in the homes of the common people.

The territory’s great love for anything sweet has been passed down, and both the recipes and fine wholesome ingredients make a trip to Mugello with its numerous bakeries a must.



TASTY MUGELLO SWEETS

The Mugello valley, which is crossed by the Sieve River, offers diverse traditional recipes. There are shortbread cookies called zuccherini, which were placed in Christmas stockings and were said to strengthen one's teeth, berlinghuzzi, a Renaissance recipe, which are first boiled and then baked, and the bocche di dama (dame's lips) made with eggs, ground almonds and lemon rind. Zuccherini can be found in many local bakeries.

Fried goodies are another Mugello tradition. Fritelle di mele (apple fritters) were prepared for the feast of St. Biagio, protector of the throat; and fritelle di riso (rice fritters) are still made today for the feast of St. Joseph. In this area, which is so rich in chestnuts, numerous sweets use either the chestnuts themselves, or chestnut flour to make delicious recipes. Castagnaccio, for example – made from chestnut flour, water, oil and rosemary – was among the more common recipes. Today it is enriched with raisins, pine nuts and walnut kernels, which were not always available to the common people.





CASTAGNACCIO

Ingredients: 500 g chestnut flower, water, rosemary, olive oil, a pinch of salt

Sift the chestnut flour (chestnut flour tends to form clumps) in a bowl. Mix slowly with cold water until you have a soft dough. Add a pinch of salt, a tablespoon of oil and pour into a low, already greased baking pan. Pour a fine thread of olive oil on the top, and sprinkle with rosemary. Bake at 150° until the cake is firm and the crust cracked.

A creamy dessert that was a favourite in every home in Mugello, and which is suited to every meal, is latte alla portoghese (Portugese milk).

Among the numerous different pies, a favourite is ricotta pie, which is made with ricotta cheese, raisins, eggs, candied citron, ground almonds, sugar and rum.

Schiacciata con l'uva (grape bread) is a simple dessert that is linked to the grape harvest.





SCHIACCIATA CON L'UVA

Ingredients: 1 kg of black wine grapes, 500 g, bread dough, 150 g sugar, extra virgin olive oil, salt

Mix the bread dough with 50 grams of sugar, 4 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil, and a pinch of salt. Wash and then remove the pips from the grapes, leave to dry. Roll out half of the dough with a rolling pin onto a previously greased baking tin. Pour half the grapes and 4 tablespoons of sugar onto the dough. Roll out the leftover dough and cover. Top with remaining grapes and sugar. Leave to rise for 30 minutes in a warm place. Bake at 180° in a preheated oven for 30 minutes.

In 1992, 500 years after the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent, the Comunità Montana Mugello presented a historical study on the traditions of the 15th century, and in particular on culinary art. The historian Dr. Greco and the gastronomist Dr. Cirri recovered original recipes from that period written in the language of the times.

The recipes were then translated, and the food was prepared using the same methods and ingredients. Thanks to this meticulous historical-gastronomical study, the recipes were prepared and offered in restaurants and bakeries in the territory. The "Torta in Balconata per dodeze persone" tier cake for a dozen or so guests" is a recipe that can be found in the book "Libro di cucina del secolo XIV" (14th century recipes) published by Frati in 1899. The book contains especially refined recipes that date back to the 14th century. The rather strange name, "Balcony cake", is due to the different layers of cake on which dried fruit and nuts and almond milk are set. The Torta in Balconata continues to be prepared and offered in bakeries in Borgo San Lorenzo.



TORTA IN BALCONATA

For the pastry: 300 g flour, 3 tablespoons oil, salt, water as required

For the filling: 500 g dates, 250 g almonds, 250 walnut kernels, 250 g raisins, 150 g brown sugar, 10 cloves

For the almond milk: 300 g almonds, water as required

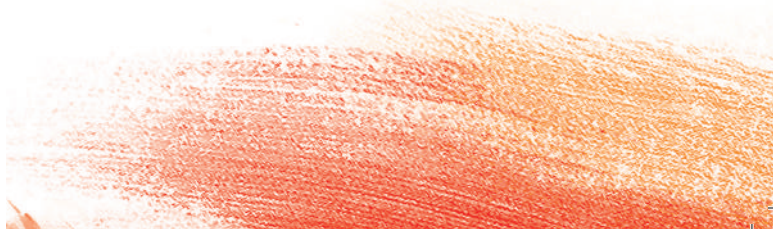
The almond milk must be prepared three days prior to making the cake: grind the almonds, place them in a glass or ceramic bowl, cover in water – at least 2 inches higher than the almonds – and store in the refrigerator.

Prepare the cake by mixing the flour, oil, salt and water as required to make a smooth, soft ball of dough. Knead for 10 minutes. Roll out the dough with the rolling pin, prepare four discs of 28–30cm in diameter, brush them with milk and bake for 15–20 minutes.

Meanwhile, pit the dates, cut into pieces and mix with the chopped almonds and walnuts, raisins, sugar and the ground cloves.

Place the discs and nut compost in a deep baking tin alternating layers of cake and nuts. Remember to leave some chopped nuts for the top layer.

Cover with the unfiltered almond milk and cook at low heat for one hour. Leave to rest for 24 hours before serving. It preserves well for many days in the fridge. If the cake looks too simple, it can be decorated with warm brown honey and almonds, walnut kernels and dates.



THE “SWEET” TASTE OF UPPER MUGELLO

In Marradi, Palazzuolo sul Senio, Firenzuola e San Godenzo the recipes and secrets of local cuisine have been passed down by word of mouth for centuries: the culinary tradition on this side of the Tuscan Apennines, which overlooks Romagna, includes dishes that are made with simple ingredients but that can only be prepared by skilful cooks.

Desserts were the most difficult to prepare, and were made mostly to celebrate important holidays: Christmas, New Year's Day, the Epiphany, Easter, and the feasts of the patron saints.

The area is rich in marroni chestnut groves, making the chestnut one of the main ingredients in numerous desserts that go from sugar coated roast chestnuts covered in Grappa (used to welcome the soon-to-be son-in-law) to the famous castagnaccio (a simple cake made with chestnut flour) to the more elaborate torta di marroni - the typical Marradi sweet, which is a pie made with tasty marroni filling on a light puff pastry base.

CHESTNUT PIE

For the puff pastry: 200g flour, 1 tbsp.. butter, milk and water as required.

For the filling: 1 kg of chestnut paste, 1 litre of milk, 4 eggs, 400 g sugar, vanilla, ½ glass rum, 2 tablespoons Alchermes liqueur, pinch of salt, lemon rind

Cut a slit in the chestnut skins, especially if fresh, and scorch on an open fire/gas burner using a chestnut roasting pan (or in the microwave). Peel the chestnuts. Boil in salted water for 1 hour. Strain and then rub through a sieve. Mix the chestnut paste with sugar, vanilla, lemon rind, rum and Alchermes liquor. Mix well. In a separate bowl beat 4 eggs and then add to the chestnut paste together with the remaining milk.

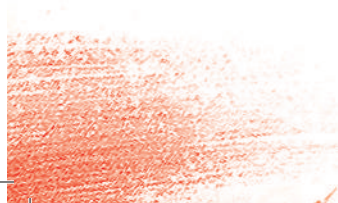


In the meantime prepare the puff pastry for the crust using the white flour, the butter, and milk, and water as required. Roll out the pastry and place in a pie tin. Add the chestnut filling and bake at low heat (120° C) for roughly 3 hours, making sure the filling doesn't boil. Test the cooking time by using a tooth pick: when the filling doesn't stick, the pie is ready. This pie is eaten cold, best after sitting 24 hours.

This chestnut pie is a favourite among the families in Marradi, and it is the most loved at the CHESTNUT FOOD FESTIVAL. This festival is one of the most famous and visited festivals in the month of October. You can taste numerous specialties made with the delicious marrone

chestnut at the various stands: "bruciate" (roasted chestnuts), chestnut cake, chestnut pudding, "castagnaccio", chestnut and ricotta pie, "tronco" (dessert roll), donuts, and chestnut fritters, chestnuts in chocolate, candied chestnuts etc.

In Palazzuolo sul Senio and in San Godenzo, like in Marradi, during the October food festival, the chestnut growers in the area sell their IGP Mugello Chestnuts directly. Visitors can, therefore, try to reproduce the delicious fried tortellini recipe themselves, in their own homes.





FRIED TORTELLINI

Per la sfoglia: 00 g flour, 20 g butter, ½ glass water, ½ glass milk, 2 tbsp. icing sugar

Per il ripieno: 500 gr. di passato di marroni, 2 cucchiaini di rum, 2 cucchiaini di pasta di castagno, 2 tbsp. rum, 2 tbsp. Alchermes liquor, 2 tbsp. icing sugar, vanilla

For the filling see chestnut pie recipe, but with the addition of rum, Alchermes and sugar. The filling must be dense.

The milk and water used in making the puff pastry must be warm enough to melt the butter. Roll out the dough in strips. Place the filling on the strip of pastry, fold closed and cut (see ravioli recipe). Deep fry in vegetable oil. Sprinkle with icing sugar and Alchermes when cool.

Simple, easy-to-make recipes were known to liven up holidays and carnival times: once upon a time relatives and neighbours gathered round, in the heat and light of the fireplace, to play games and exchange rhymes to the sound of the accordion and the organette. Together, they enjoyed ballotte (chestnuts boiled in water with laurel leaves, eaten either hot or cold), croccante (candied walnuts or hazel nuts made), and chestnut flour fritters.

Many of the sweets were influenced by the traditional foods of the nearby Emilia Romagna, but also by the distant city of Florence. During the Epiphany, home cooks prepared crunchy

biscuits and brigidini to fill the stocking for the Befana (in Italy the Christmas stocking is prepared on the 6th of January for the Befana, an old lady on a broom. The word derives from the word Epifania). In the same period crunchy candied sweets and sugar cookies – dunked in milk – were easily preserved because they were unleavened. In Firenzuola they are shaped like a rooster's crest and are made red with Alchermes liquor; or they are shaped like a donut and made white with melted sugar and scented with anise.

On All Souls' Day, November 2nd, they would make dry round white or red biscuits: these were the fusaie of the Dominican nuns, used during Lent for their lack of fat.

For the joy of the children, the town's women prepared spumini, meringue cookies, a simple recipe made with sugar and egg whites.

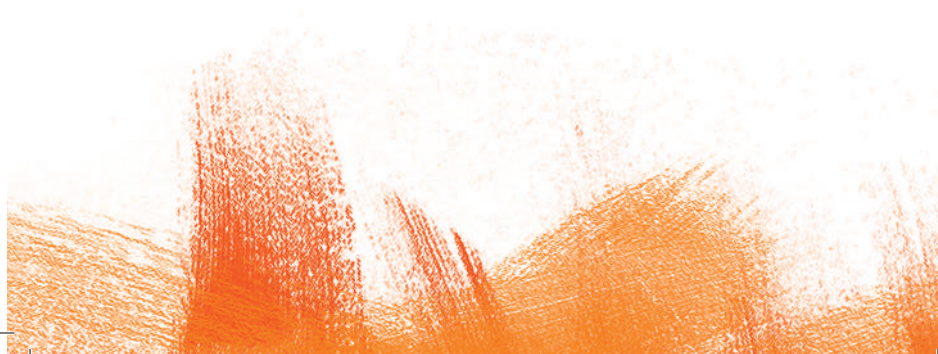
Among the most common creamy desserts we find what is called Zuppa Inglese (literally English soup) made with finger cookies dipped in Alchermes and in mint or latte alla portoghese (Portuguese milk), which is great for the end of the meal and for pregnant women, children and older folk.



LATTE ALLA PORTOGHESE

Ingredients: 1 litre of milk, 200 g sugar, 4 eggs, or 3 eggs and 2 yolks, vanilla extract, lemon rind, 4 tablespoons sugar to caramelize the oven safe bowl

Boil the milk with the vanilla, the lemon rind, and the sugar for 15 minutes. Cool. Add whipped eggs and some caramelized sugar previously taken from the bowl. Place the mix in an oven safe bowl lined in caramelized sugar and cook in bain-marie for two hours. Cool. To remove the dessert from the bowl, pass over the heat, turn upside-down onto a deep serving dish.







GOOD,
HEALTHY,
AND JUST
AROUND
THE CORNER



There is nothing better than the taste of a freshly picked fruit or vegetable. There is nothing more reassuring than knowing where each morsel of food we eat comes from. There is nothing greener than buying local products.

Mugello, the farmland of Florence, produces milk, meat, oil, wine, honey, cereal, and potatoes, as well as the well-known Marrone IGP chestnut. It goes without saying that the local cuisine uses these Mugello made ingredients to make its wholesome yet tasty dishes.

MUGELLO COWS' MILK

WHITE GOLD

The history of dairy farming stretches a long way back into the Mugello past: in the 15th century, on their Panna family estate, the Medici family was already breeding brown "Swiss" cows for their own use and for trade. Today, centuries later, the territory is true to this tradition: there are, in fact, numerous breeders in the towns of Firenzuola, Marradi, Palazzuolo sul Senio, Barberino di Mugello, Scarperia e San Piero a Sieve, Borgo San Lorenzo and Vicchio. The cow's milk produced in the area is destined, for the most part, for the Centrale del Latte della Toscana SpA (winner of the 2016 IRA, Italian Resilience Award). The Mugello territory, which is rich in pastures and renowned for its ancient zoo technical tradition, has always bred dairy cows. It is the home

of Mukki Selezione Mugello (Mukki Select) milk.

This milk, with its full, unmistakable flavour, is collected every day from 26 selected dairy farms just for Mukki: it is strictly controlled, pasteurized and packaged. Mukki Select Milk comes in High Quality Whole or Partially Skimmed, in one litre containers. The completely recyclable containers embody the essence of the high quality product they contain: white, elegant, and marked simply with the letter "M", blue is for whole milk and green for partially skimmed. In the Mugello territory we also find the organic milk line. Mukki takes the milk from 3 dairy farms that follow strict organic agriculture regulations. This milk becomes Mukki Il Podere Centrale. It is available in one litre containers both Whole and Partially Skimmed



THE MILK ROUTE

The milk route unites the 29 dairy farms chosen by Mukki, which produce the milk that becomes Mukki “Selezione Mugello” and “il Podere Centrale”. This route not only crosses Mugello on its way to collect milk from dairy farms, but it also passes through a breathtaking countryside where one can buy an array of hand-crafted products, as well as take in the cultural and culinary wealth of the territory. The Milk Route provides the territory with a trademark that is also important for the production of milk: numerous dairy farms uphold age-old values, traditions and culture, while protecting the environment and local economy.

On the web site www.mukki.it you can find details and addresses to visit the milk farms.



CHEESE

It is also known as “Raviggiolo”, and is a crust-less, cylindrical-shaped, fresh cheese. This cheese is white with a slightly acidic taste, tending towards sweet with the characteristic aroma of milk. It is produced all year long, and in particular in the town of Palazzuolo sul Senio.

The production of cows’ milk cheese has expanded in the Mugello territory in recent years: from the more ancient and typical ricotta cheese, to mozzarella, scamorza, and herb cheese etc.



FROM SHEEP'S MILK TO FRESH RICOTTA AND SAVOURY PECORINO CHEESE

RICOTTA CHEESE

It is said that Cimabue, world renowned artist, when passing through Vespignano, met the very young Giotto while he was tending sheep and drawing. Stunned by such mastery, he is said to have stopped to talk to the young boy who then offered the artist part of his snack: a bowl of ricotta cheese with honey.

Like in the distant past, Mugello continues to breed sheep for the production of milk and, therefore, the production of delicious ricotta cheese. Ricotta is known as an albumin or serum cheese, a cheese made as a by-product of cheese from the 'recooked' whey, hence the name, 'ricotta'. The finished product takes the shape of the container, usually a truncated cone, with flat sides, and is shiny white. It is creamy, with a mild, fresh taste and a strong aroma of milk.

Ricotta is one of the principal ingredients in both sweet and salty foods, cooked or uncooked. There are many examples of these dishes, for example, ricotta cheese cake or tortelli with ricotta cheese and spinach. Ricotta cheese, however, can also be eaten with just a pinch of salt, or as a dessert with a bit of jam, or, more traditionally, with acacia honey. Another particularly traditional way to eat ricotta is with "pattona", a chestnut flour paste.



PECORINO CHEESE

In Mugello there is one big producer of Toscano DOP (certified) pecorino cheese, but there are also numerous smaller producers that abide by all the rules of traditional pecorino making. Tuscan Pecorino DOP cheese has a “soft” or “semi-soft” texture and is made with 100% whole sheep’s milk. The finished cheese is disc-shaped. The diameter of the disc varies from 15 to 22 cm; the sides are slightly convex and 7 to 11 cm high; and the cheese weighs from 1 to 3.5 kilos. The crust is of variable shades of yellow, while the cheese itself is yellowy white with a mild flavour and the scent of spices. Pecorino Toscano DOP comes with the DOP seal branded on the crust and is therefore easily recognizable.

The Consortium for the safeguarding of pecorino cheese exercises strict control over the production of the DOP (protected designation of origin) cheese. It is consumed fresh or grated, depending on the age of the cheese. Small farms in Mugello that breed sheep produce their own cheese. The methods used for the production of this cheese are all similar to those described in the regulations for Pecorino Toscano DOP and the quality is often very high, also because in many cases the production is organic.

BEEF

Meat has always had a long standing tradition in Mugello, and for numerous years now the territory has been dedicated to promoting this wealth. Only breeds which are able to adapt to the environment are bred here. For example: the Limousine, Charolaise, Chianina, Calvana and the Romagnola breeds. There are two different types of breeding farms, the organic farm, which abides by strict rules, and the conventional one. However, the feed is strictly vegetable, and the living conditions of the animals are excellent. Purebred calves are slaughtered before they are 24 months of age.

The foundation of the Centro Carni di Rabatta (Vicchio) butcher shop has provided the perfect end to the Mugello cattle breeders production line: it provides, in fact, it is a guarantee for both breeders and customers. Created thanks to the intervention of the Comunità Montana Mugello Val di Sieve, today the Centro Carni run by CAF (Cooperativa Agricola di Firenzuola) works the meat for anyone who needs it, but also sells the meat of its members (mostly Mugello based farms), who observe strict rules that guarantee the traceability of the product: from the birth of the animal to the butchering, forbidding,



for example, the use of synthetic substances that may alter the natural development of the animal.

Carne Bovina Biologica (organic beef) comes from breeding farms which are subject to regular controls by expert technicians who can be chosen by the individual farms, as well as by independent national control boards that oversee the entire production line. Animals that

are raised organically must have access to a grazing area, and, most importantly, must be fed dry forage and cereals which derive strictly from organic crops; any preventive and/or systematic use of drugs is strictly prohibited. Recently, Centro Carni has started to work wild game in order to provide the customer with healthy, excellent quality products.

CONSUMER INFORMATION

“LOOK FOR AND CHOOSE MUGELLO MEAT”

While shopping in traditional butcher shops, look for a special notice on the butcher's counter. This notice contains the I.D. of the meat: it is a certificate provided by the butcher for the identification and traceability of the product and includes the name of the breeder.

ORGANIC BEEF

Organic beef is provided with information regarding the organic production process, the I.D. numbers and sex of the animal, as well as the age at the time of butchering, the weight of the carcass, the breeding farm, the date and place of butchering.

THE MUGELLO IGP “MARRONE” CHESTNUT

The Mugello IGP “Marrone” is characterised by its medium-large size, the ellipsoidal shape, its one flat side and one markedly convex side. The pulp is white, crunchy and delicately sweet.

Neither phito-pharmaceuticals nor fertilizers are used during the production, and no chemicals or additives are used for the preservation: they may undergo a treatment using first cold water and then hot. Many families freeze the peeled chestnut. The size of chestnuts to be consumed fresh are 80 pieces per kilo.

The area of production includes the towns of Marradi, Palazzuolo sul Senio, and Dicomano, and, in part, the towns of Borgo Lorenzo, Firenzuola, Londa, Rufina, Scarperia e San Piero, San Godenzo, and Vicchio.

MUGELLO IGP MARRONE FLOUR

Chestnuts are dried using the traditional method in chestnut wood, and only chestnuts that are smaller than 80 pieces per kilo in size are used. The flour produced is not more than 30% of the weight of the fresh product.

Chestnut flour is very fine, and can go from a pale yellow to a beige to an amber colour, depending on the drying process. The smoky taste can be more or less defined. Used in ancient times to make polenta (a mash), which was eaten in the place of bread in the daily diet, today it is used to make a wide variety of dishes, both salty and sweet. In particular, today the flour is used to make delicious sweets, biscuits, and cakes.

CONTROL AND VALORIZATION OF THE CHESTNUT

**The Consorzio Marrone
del Mugello I.G.P.**
c/o Unione Montana dei Comuni
del Mugello
Via Palmiro Togliatti, 45 - 50032
Borgo San Lorenzo (FI)
The controlling bodies are:
The Camera di Commercio

di Firenze (Chamber of
Commerce)
The association "Strada Del
Marrone", Mugello di Marradi
Piazza Scalette, 1 - Marradi (FI)
info@stradadelmarrone.it
www.stradadelmarrone.it

EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL

The olive tree was a holy plant for the ancient Etruscans: in time it has come to represent the life and extraordinary landscape of the Tuscan countryside.

In Mugello the colder, more humid climate has not permitted the extensive growth of olive trees, especially at the bottom of the valleys where the frost damages the plants. However, in the past 15 years, based on statistics, the production of olive oil has been rising constantly and is now present throughout the Mugello territory, and, as tests by the chamber of commerce prove, the quality is first-rate. The production of Mugello olive oil falls under the IGP Colline Fiorentine (Florentine hills) area.

The trees grow at from 200 to 500 metres above sea level: the present varieties are called leccino, frantoio, moraiolo, pendolino, maurino, and other varieties native to the land.

The olives, which are hand-picked, are moved within 24 hours to the oil-mill where they are cold pressed mechanically (under 28° C). The oil thus produced is then transported to the aziende and bottled.

The extra virgin olive oil is green and can have golden hues. The taste is fruity and mature with a hint of almond, artichoke and grass, and with the presence of tarter and spicy notes (olio pizzichino).





WINE

Mugello has never been without vineyards. During the Renaissance – in the historical reconstruction by Zeffiro Ciuffoletti – Mugello wines were well thought of, more than the Tuscan products known today as “excellent” wines throughout the world.

For roughly a decade, from the year 2000, Mugello wine has been regaining its long lost standing as a great wine by presenting qualities that once seemed inaccessible, surprising both public and critics. The character of the wine amazed even those “pioneers” who had invested in the territory by restoring vineyards and wine-cellars.

Obviously, technical development in agriculture and wine making has played an important role in the reestablishment of Mugello vineyards, but we must not overlook the great passion and willingness to take risks that Mugello farmers have showed. We are talking, in particular, of traditional vines such as Sangiovese, Malvasia and Trebbiano, to which Merlot, Rebo and Pinot nero (among the red wines), and Chardonnay, Sauvignon, Riesling, Traminer, Muller Thurgau and Petit Manseng (among the white wines) have been added. Satisfaction for this achievement is certainly called for, because these quality wines are able to hold their own among the numerous other fine Mugello products.

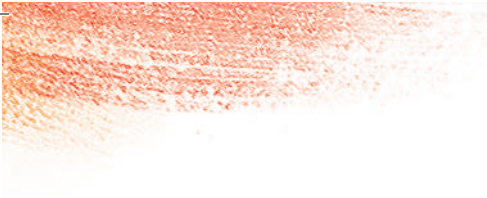
And finally, with satisfaction comes official recognition: in the past few years some of the Mugello vineyards have received excellent ratings in some of the country’s most important wine guides.

ORGANIC SPELT

Spelt is an ancient cereal. It was first grown 9-10 thousand years ago. This cereal has helped man survive for generations, and has helped give rise to the first settlements (the end of the nomadic way of life). The Romans and Greeks, as well as the Egyptians, grew spelt. The Romans used farina/flour (the Italian word derives from farro, spelt) to prepare a sort of mash called "farratum".

Spelt is a very hardy product. Being resistant to drought, as well as other adverse conditions, it is a fine alternative on inland, hillside and mountainous cereal-growing areas. Since spelt has not been genetically modified, it cannot be produced in the same quantity as wheat, but it can be grown in more difficult and marginal areas because of its resilient quality, thus reducing this disparity.

For some years now organic spelt has been produced in Firenzuola, but also in Vicchio. It is grown, worked and made ready for the market locally. The production does not employ chemical fertilizers, phito-pharmaceuticals or weed-killers. In Mugello, in Scarperia e San Piero, we can also find a farm estate that produces spelt using an integrated pest management (IPM) system.



Seeds are planted in autumn using the unhusked grain. The harvest of spelt takes place in summer with the use of a normal wheat threshing machinery. At this point a series of alternating phases take place: sifting (which helps eliminate impurities), stripping (elimination of the husk), polishing (elimination of a part of the film that envelops the grain, which helps reduce cooking times), and, at last, packaging.

Contrary to what people may think, spelt is a quick easy meal to prepare, and it does not need soaking. 15 minutes is all you need to make a fresh tasty salad, and in 18 minutes soup is served. Spelt can also be bought “express”: ready to eat in just 2 minutes! Spelt pasta is ready in 6-7 minutes and can be served with simple sauces made with fish or vegetables. Spelt flour, when mixed with regular flour, is also excellent for making homemade pasta, bread, pizza, pies and biscuits.

MUGELLO BREAD

Tuscany is famous for its unsalted bread, which is by and large the most widespread today: it is plain, with a traditional flavour, and is baked in conventionally shaped loaves. A loaf of Tuscan bread can come in various forms: the “bozza” is round; the “filone” is oval; and the “ciabatta” is flat. The loaves are plain with a crunchy exterior and a soft, honey-combed crumb, which comes from leaving the dough to rise for many hours, and the use of long baking times. Traditional Tuscan bread is baked in wood-fired ovens. Throughout Mugello, traditional Tuscan-style bread is found in most kitchens: this traditional loaf is even produced in the towns of

Marradi, Palazzuolo and Firenzuola, which are on the Emiliano-Romagnolo side of the Apennines.

The water mill, Molino Foralossi, in Firenzuola, stone presses the wheat, which is never genetically modified and is grown on farms in Mugello. The flour that derives from this process is rich in wheat germ, fibres, minerals, vitamins and amino acids: all an essential part of a healthy diet.

Mugello flour is used in the production of bread of different sizes: ½ kilo – 2 kilos. These can be found in artisanal bakeries that are part of the Consorzio for the safeguarding and promotion of Mugello bread.



HONEY

Honey naturally reflects the distinctiveness of the area in which it is produced, distilling essences that distinguish it from other areas. It is, therefore, a unique and

inimitable food. The different surroundings make every type of honey a particular blend of nectar-bearing essences. Mugello produces three types of honey.

ACACIA HONEY: this honey is liquid, pale yellow, almost transparent; has a very delicate sweet taste, and a very fine and lasting smell. The aroma is of flowers and vanilla.

CHESTNUT HONEY: the presence of numerous chestnut woods (which includes the renowned Marrone chestnut) facilitates the production of this honey, which is produced on hills and mountains; it is not thick, and is bright amber. It is not particularly sweet and has a somewhat tart aftertaste and a strong aroma of chestnut woods. It does not thicken for a long period of time, and is pale amber with a strong herbal aroma. Like all dark honeys, it is particularly rich in mineral salts.

MILLEFIORI FLORAL ESSENCE: since this honey is the product of many flower species, it offers different qualities and aromas. It is not thick but grainy, bitter-sweet with a tart aftertaste, and it varies in colour from pale-green to blue-brown.

Notwithstanding the various diseases that attack bees, Mugello and Upper Mugello provide an excellent environment for the production of honey. There are, however, very few big producers, and the many smaller ones, such as *aziendas* and farm-holiday resorts, only produce modest quantities for personal use, and these are not present on the market.

TORTELLLO DI PATATE

The tortello di patata is a dish that originated in Mugello: it is a true culinary work of art made from poor ingredients, but which produces a “regal” dish. Tortelli di patate are soft, square, yellow ravioli filled with mashed potatoes, cheese, garlic and parsley. They are the perfect mix of fresh pasta and tasty potatoes.

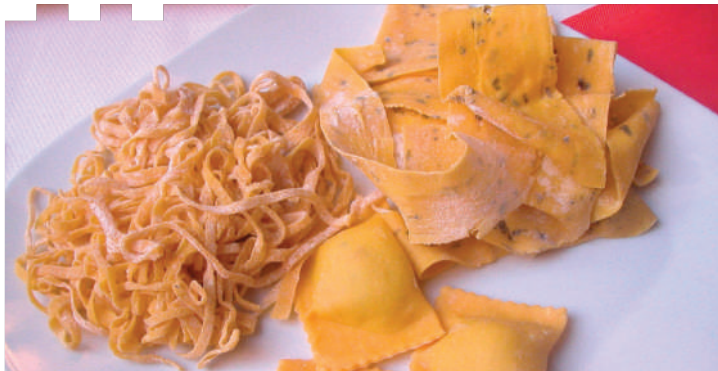
This stuffed pasta has been a part of the Tuscan and Romagna diet for centuries. In 1400 the poet Pucci, from the court of Lorenzo the Magnificent, wrote: “I believe mostly in good wine - Those who drink it will be fine - I believe in cake

and the tortello – Mother the first, son the latter...”

The tortello di patate was a poor dish: the filling was made with the first potato harvest in 1800. In fact, the filling is an alternative to the chestnut filling used in the Apennines.

It is a main dish and can be served with meat sauce made with beef, goose, rabbit, wild boar or mushrooms, and should be accompanied by a robust red wine.

Along with the tortello, many local bakeries sell fine fresh pasta such as tagliatelle, tagliolini, cappelletti, and ravioli.



POTATOES

“The famine of 1817, a result of the Napoleonic wars, brought starvation to the inhabitants of Mugello. As a result, Grand Duke Ferdinando 3rd urged farmers to grow potatoes to reduce the effects of the famine.

“The parish priest of Olmi (a locality near Borgo San Lorenzo) in the editor’s note states that a part of these potatoes were given to the poor to plant. The priest planted 400 potatoes, for which he had paid 8 lire/100 potatoes, and reaped 12,260, which he then sold at 5,5 coppers/100...A century later, in the 1940’s, potatoes were growing on 400 hectares of Mugello soil, mostly in Vicchio” (taken from “Il vero tortello mugellano” by Tebaldo Lorini).

Loved by both young and old, potatoes are used to make the filling for Mugello’s most well-liked dish: the tortello di patate. Mugello grown potatoes are either white, yellow or red. They are generally oval, uniform and without deformities, and range from 50 to 80 mm in size. Smaller potatoes, 30-50 mm or less, are just as tasty. There is also a fast growing production of organic potatoes in Mugello.

Potatoes are planted in March. The soil is then turned twice and often needs watering. The harvest is in August. The potatoes are then put into cold storage, without the use of chemical treatment to stop vegetative reproduction.



MUGELLO WHITE TRUFFLE

Truffle picking also has ancient roots in Mugello, and numerous documents, dated mid-1800, testify to the importance of the production: in particular a priest from San Giovanni Maggiore church, in Borgo San Lorenzo, calculated the potential of truffle growing on the territory, and anticipated, with remarkable foresight, a favorable economic and gastronomic return.

Under regional regulations (L.R. 50/95) for the qualification of the product, five geographical areas have been named for the production of the white truffle. Regional regulations state that truffles can be picked only from September 10th to December 31st.

The Tuscan white truffle (*Tuber magnatum pico*) has a smooth pale yellow or green outer skin, and a more or less light hazel-brown pulp that sometimes presents bright red hues, and it has numerous thin pale lines running through it, which disappear when cooked. The size can vary from that of a corn seed to, at most, that of an orange. The aroma is intense and pleasant, similar to that of natural gas or fermented cheese.

White truffles are eaten fresh, because cooking causes them to lose a huge part of their organoleptic qualities. Minor species are also found in Mugello, for example: bianchetto (*Tuber Borchii* Vitt.); scorzone (*Tuber aestivum* Vitt.); uncinato (*Tuber uncinatum* Chatin); and brumale (*Tuber brumale* Vitt.). The prestigious black truffle has also been found on the territory (*Tuber melanosporum* Vitt.).

TRUFFLE ASSOCIATIONS

There are only two truffle associations in Mugello that aim to promote the truffle. These associations protect existing truffle sites, and recover and improve other sites that later become controlled truffle sites:

**Mugello Truffle
Association**
www.tartufaimugello.it

**Barberino Truffle
Association**
www.tartufaibarberinesi.org



SAFFRON OF THE FLORENTINE HILLS

There are many historical accounts about the production and sale of saffron. It was considered one of the great riches of the Florentine Hills. In ancient times it was referred to as “zima di Firenze”.

Saffron was also used as money, for the trade goods, and in the kitchen, for the making of refined dishes. In Medieval times in Florence, merchants from around the continent gathered to buy saffron. In 1440, at the time of Da Uzzano, an excise duty of 8 florins per load had to be paid on saffron traded in Florence, but which was not produced locally. Saffron has returned to the Florentine hills and is being produced with the same excellent quality it had in Medieval times.

Saffron is grown once again in the province of Florence, and in particular in Mugello. Hillsides, sunny terrains at 300 – 500 metres above sea level, where the substrata is made of sandy, calcareous marl, and of clayey schist and sand, are the most suited to this production, because they provide fairly loose, easily permeable ground.

The bulbs are planted from the

second half of August to the first of September. In mid-October the flowers are handpicked and stored until they wither and the stigma falls from the calyx. The stigmas are then collected in containers where they are dried (called toasting) near the open flame of a fireplace or wood burning stove for 15–20 minutes, or by other forms or heat (fan heating systems). One hectare of land produces 80,000 kilos of fresh flowers, which means 60 kg of stigmas that must be dried. A request to include saffron in the list of protected DOP foods under the name “Saffron delle Colline di Firenze” has been put forth and is awaiting confirmation.

FOR INFORMATION

**Comitato Produttori Saffron
delle Colline Fiorentine Dop
(DOP Saffron Producers)**

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MUGELLO ZUCCHERINI

Zuccherini are dry, round biscuits with a whole in the middle. They are white, because after baking they are dunked in melted sugar, and taste of anise. Zuccherini were widely consumed in Firenzuola and in Barberino di Mugello: they were the perfect end to every special meal, holiday, and festivity, especially weddings. These biscuits are handmade, making them particularly tasty. Mass production, in fact, has not been able to provide these biscuits with their particular flavour. The recipe for zuccherini has been handed down by word of mouth through the ages.

In the traditional recipe, the dough is prepared by mixing white flour, butter, lemon rind, milk and yeast. Small donut-shaped biscuits are prepared and put in the oven for 30 minutes. The sugar and anise liquor are mixed together in a copper pot (known as the “paiolo”) with a bit of water. Once baked, the biscuits are dunked in the melted sugar and left to cool. They can be found in bakeries in Firenzuola and in Cavallina, in Barberino. They are sometimes soaked in Alchermes, which gives the biscuits a rich red colour.





BEER

An absolute novelty among the excellent Mugello products is beer. It is the drink that the ancient Egyptians called “liquid bread”, and that the Etruscans were first to produce in Italy. Mugello beer is an extraordinary addition to other fine Mugello products like the IGP marrone chestnut

and organic spelt. This home-made beer is a genuine drink with very little ‘head’. It is unfiltered and unpasteurized, and doesn’t contain preservatives or stabilizers. It presents a world of unknown flavours that compete easily with more famous, industrially produced products.

VODKA

In 2015 the first organic Tuscan Vodka was made in Mugello. This vodka is made from four ancient grains *Verna, Bolero, Bologna, and Sieve*, and water from the Mugello Apennines. It is unique for its vanilla and

golden apple hues, the aroma of fresh wheat and medicinal herbs, and the hint of almond.



THE RECIPES OF CHEF INCROCCI

Luigi Incrocci, illustre cuoco di livella is an internationally famous chef, a man who represents Mugello, but who is also a point of reference for the territory. He presents for us here four traditional recipes - four readaptations, one for each season - using similar ingredients, and in so doing gives you, the reader, useful suggestions on how to bring a bit of Tuscany into your own

home.

Here we have some unusual but pleasant flavour combinations like, for example, panzanella with raveggiolo, pecorino with saffron and truffles, ricotta with chocolate and beer sauce; and also the more traditional dishes like lo *spezzatino al vino rosso* (stewed meat in red wine) and potatoes: a "must" in Mugello cuisine.

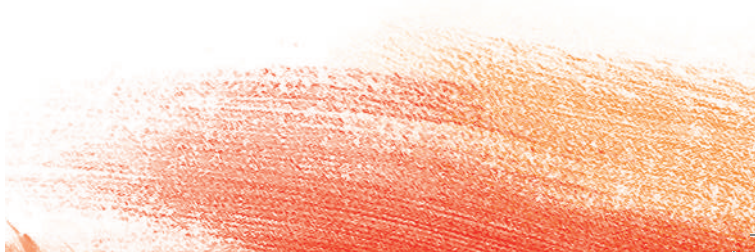


MILK AND SAFFRON PUDDING IN HONEY SAUCE

Ingredienti: Fresh Mugello Milk 500 ml, Sugar 200 g, Vanilla pod (1), Saffron, 10 pistil bag, Gelatin in sheets 15 g

For the sauce: Mugello honey 50 g, Mugello fresh cream 50 g

Bring the milk to a boil with the sugar, vanilla, and saffron. Turn off the heat and add the gelatin (previously soaked in cold water and strained). Pour into small or larger size mould and leave in the fridge to set for at least 2 hours.
For the sauce, whip honey with warm cream. Cool. Remove the pudding and cover in the cold sauce.





BEEF CROCHETTES WITH PECORINO CHEESE SAFFRON AND TRUFFLES

Ingredienti: Minced beef 500 g, Dry Mugello brown bread 200gr, Whole Mugello milk 100 ml, Grated Mugello pecorino 100 g, Saffron pistils (7/8), Truffles to taste, Salt pepper to taste, Flour "00" 100 g, Whole eggs (2), Tomato paste 500 g, Sage leaves, Garlic cloves (2)

Mix the beef and the bread (previously soaked in milk and strained), the grated pecorino, the pistils of saffron, finely ground truffle, eggs, salt and pepper. Make medium sized meatballs, roll in flour and fry in extra virgin olive oil. Chop the garlic and stir fry with a bit of olive oil.

Add the tomato paste, sage leaves, and cook over low heat for 30 minutes. Put the croquettes in the sauce and continue to cook for 30 minutes in a covered pot. Add salt and pepper to taste.







RED WINE RUSTIC STEW WITH POTATOES

Ingredienti: Beef pieces (front quarter) 1 kg, Mugello red wine (2 glasses), Carrots (2), Celery (3 stalks), Red onion (2), Rosemary, sage and laurel to taste, Mugello potatoes 800 g, Tomatoes 400 g, Salt and pepper to taste

Wash the vegetables and cut them into pieces. Put the extra virgin olive oil, the vegetables, the cubes of beef, the red wine, the herbs tied with string, the tomatoes, and the salt and pepper in a pot. Add 2/3 glasses of water and cook on low heat in a covered pot for roughly 90 minutes. Wash and peel the potatoes and cut into cubes.

Stir fry in a pan with the sage for at least 15 minutes, add to the stew and cook for additional 30 minutes. When the beef is cooked, remove from heat and serve hot.



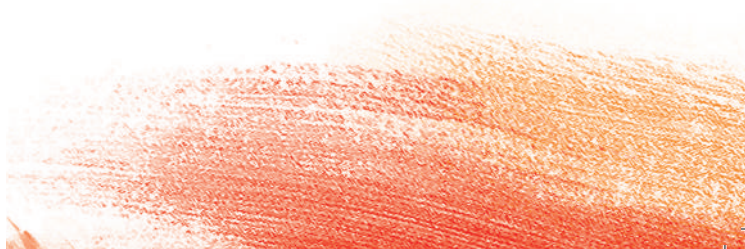
FARROTTO (SPELT) WITH SAFFRON AND BEANS AND HERBS

Ingredienti: Mugello spelt 500 g, Vegetable broth 3 l, Scalogno onion (3), Leak (1), Saffron 2 g in pistils, Salt and pepper to taste, White cooked beans 300 g, Mixed herbs, Extra virgin olive oil to taste, Grated cheese 100 g, Butter 50 g

Chop the leaks and scalogno onions, stir fry in a pot, add the spelt, toast and continue to cover in hot vegetable soup (like risotto).

5 minutes before removing from heat, add the saffron, the cooked beans, the herbs, for example, marjoram, thyme, oregano etc., the parmesan cheese and the butter.

Add salt and pepper to taste, and serve hot with a trickle of Mugello extra virgin olive oil.





FRESH SPELT PASTA, PECORINO AND WHITE TRUFFLES

For the pasta: Spelt flour 150 g, Semolina 150 g, Whole eggs (4), Extra virgin olive oil 1 tbsp., Pinch of salt

For the pecorino sauce: Semi-hard Mugello pecorino 200 g, Mugello fresh cream 200 ml, White truffle to taste

Mix the spelt flour and semolina, add oil, salt and whole eggs.

Make a ball of dough, and leave to rest for 30 minutes.

For the sauce, cut the pecorino into cubes, add the fresh cream and bring to a boil on low heat until the cheese is melted into a smooth cream. Roll out the dough and cut into either “Tagliolini” or “Tagliatelle” shaped pasta.

Boil in abundant salted water, drain and stir into the pecorino sauce.

Before serving, add white truffles and pepper.





PANZANELLA WITH MUGELLO BREAD AND RAVEGGIOLO CREAM CHEESE

Ingredienti: Dry Mugello bread 300 g, Tomatoes (2), Cucumber (1), Raveggiolo cheese 300 g, Mugello extra virgin olive oil to taste, Salt and pepper to taste, Basil leaves to taste

Cut the dry bread into thin slices, toast in the oven for a few minutes.

Cut the tomatoes (remove the seeds) and the cucumber (remove peel and seeds) into small cubes.

Serve with oil, salt, pepper, and small strips of basil.

Prepare the panzanella by layering slices of bread with the tomatoes and cucumbers and a spoonful of raveggiolo (3/4 layers).

Add a spoonful of raveggiolo onto the last slice, a basil leaf, and a trickle of extra virgin olive oil.





TORTELLI DI PATATE IN CHESTNUT PASTA WITH GOAT CHEESE AND PORK RAGU

For the pasta: Chestnut flour 200 g, Flour 00 400 g, Whole eggs (6), Pinch of salt, Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil

For the filling: Yellow Mugello potatoes 800 g, Garlic clove (1), Parsley, Grated Mugello hard pecorino 100 g, Fresh Mugello goat cheese 200 g, Pinch of nutmeg, Salt and pepper to taste

For the pork ragu: Minced pork meat 600 g, Carrot (1), Celery stalk (3), Golden onion (1), Thyme shoot, White wine (1 glass), Salt and pepper to taste

Mix the flour, add the salt, oil and eggs. Make a ball of dough. Leave to rest for 30 minutes.

For the filling: Boil the potatoes with the skins, possible of the same size, until cooked.

Chop the parsley with the garlic, stir fry, add the goat cheese, a small cup of water and boil for a few minutes.

Meanwhile mash the potatoes, add the grated pecorino and the nutmeg.

Add the garlic and parsley previously prepared and cooled, add salt and pepper to taste. Cool the mixture.

For the ragu: Wash the herbs and spices and finely chop or mince together. Stir fry in a pot with Mugello extra virgin olive oil, add the pork, and thyme and cook for a few minutes.

Add white wine, heat until it evaporates.

Cover the meat with vegetable broth and cook for 90 minutes on low heat. Roll out the pasta, place a teaspoon of potato filling, and goat cheese, and close the “tortello”.

Please note: squeeze out extra air from inside the tortello! Cook in abundant salted water for 4/5 minutes and serve with ragu topping.

Note: a bit of lemon rind gives the dish more zest.



RICOTTA CHEESE AND BITTER CHOCOLATE SOUFFLÉ WITH BEER SAUCE

Ingredients: Whole milk 500ml, Whole eggs (4), Cornstarch 2 tbsp., Sugar 150 g, Mugello ricotta 350 g, Bitter chocolate 100 g

Per la salsa: Mugello double malt beer 250 ml, White granulated sugar 250 g, Egg yolk (the egg white will be needed for the soufflé) (4), Cornstarch 1 tbsp., Vanilla pod (1), Whole milk 100 ml

For the soufflé: Make a classical custard by boiling the milk with the sugar, beat the eggs in a bowl with the cornstarch.

Add the warm milk and cook for a few seconds. Let cool.

For the sauce: Make custard by adding beer to the milk. Beat the egg yolk and sugar, cornstarch and vanilla separately.

Add the warm milk and beer, place on the burner and cook on low heat until dense.

Coat the soufflé mould with butter and flour.

In a bowl mix the cold custard, the sieved ricotta, the finely chopped chocolate and the whipped egg whites (they must be firm).

Stir slowly from bottom up.

Place in preheated oven at 190° C per the time needed (according to mould size).

Remove from the oven and serve with the cold sauce on the side.

Texts

Ufficio Turismo Unione Montana dei
Comuni del Mugello

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Comunità Montana Mugello

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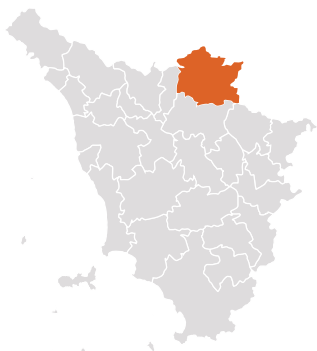
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