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Laboratori Slow Food

Costiera Sorrentina e Capri

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TUESDAY, APRIL 21 - 3:30 PM

BISCUITS OF CASTELLAMMARE DI STABIA, HISTORY AND TRADITIONS

Stabiese biscuits represent a traditional and identifying artisanal production of Castellammare di Stabia, strongly linked to the Water resource of the city's historic 28 springs. Some types of biscuits were used in ancient times by fishermen and sailors and were known as "galletta" or "sea biscuit," characterized by a long shelf life, as they were free of yeast and salt and baked for twice as long as common bread. In Naples, the proverb "to be like a Castellammare biscuit" refers to a stubborn person, comparable to the hardness and lack of flexibility of the biscuit.

Over the centuries, the recipe has been passed down from generation to generation, becoming enriched with new ingredients, shapes, and preparation techniques. The biscuit, with its particular cigar-like shape, was highly appreciated as is or soaked and eaten while conversing over a good glass of Acqua della Madonna, sitting at the famous kiosks near the port. Over time, a slightly sweeter version was also born; it was sold by street vendors at toll booths or along the Sorrento state road, in transparent bags or in blue and yellow bags, inspired by the identifying colors of the city.

Today, this tradition needs a greater push to promote the ancient artisanal production, safeguard the historic recipes, and at the same time encourage the creation of new production lines, shapes, and flavors to win over the consumers of our time.



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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22 - 3:30 PM VIOLET ARTICHOKE OF SCHITO, SLOW FOOD PRESIDIUUM

The artichoke of Castellammare is a subtype of the Romanesco variety, from which it differs due to its early production season and the color of its bracts, which are green with violet hues. This precociousness is due to the particular mildness of the climate and the habit of regenerating the plants every year. During the vegetative recovery period, the best "carducci"—the lateral herbaceous shoots that sprout around the mother plants—are chosen, removed along with small portions of the rhizome, and transplanted. Its origin is rooted in the Roman era: a hamlet of Castellammare di Stabia, Schito, was considered at the time to be particularly suited to horticulture. Proof of this is that the area, not far from Pompeii, was identified by the toponym "gardens of Schito."

Another unique feature is the ancient cultivation technique traditionally associated with this variety. It was customary, in fact, to cover the first apical inflorescence (called mamma or mammoletta) with terracotta cups (pignatte or pignattelle) handmade by local artisans. The protection from sunlight provided by the pignatta during the growth phase of the artichoke makes it particularly tender and pale in color.



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THURSDAY, APRIL 23 - 3:30 PM SORRENTO PENINSULA WALNUT, SLOW FOOD PRESIDIO

A highly prized population of walnuts is cultivated in the Sorrento Peninsula. The fruits are medium-sized, with a regular oval shape, a rounded base, and a slightly pointed apex, featuring a thin, light cinnamon-colored shell. The kernel is pale, voluminous, tender, and crunchy, with a pleasant and delicate flavor. Historically, in this area, the walnut tree grew in symbiosis with olive trees and vines on hilly terraces, while on the plains, it was associated with citrus groves. Its link to the territory is ancient: Sorrento walnuts were already cultivated and appreciated by the Romans. This is evidenced by the remains of fossilized walnuts and charred trees found in Herculaneum, as well as paintings depicting walnuts found in the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii. Today, this connection is also witnessed by the names of certain locations and streets: the municipality of Piano di Sorrento, for example, is also known by the name "Caruotto," from the Greek charouon, which means walnut. The harvest, done by hand with the help of long, thin chestnut poles, is called "bacchiatura" and takes place from September to late October, depending on the area; it involves beating the branches to ensure the walnuts fall from the trees. The walnuts are marketed fresh, just harvested, or dried on outdoor racks. There are many typical recipes from the Sorrento Peninsula that use them as an ingredient: dressings, sauces, not to mention confectionery (biscuits, nougats, semi-frozen desserts), and the famous liqueur called "nocino." Following in-depth nutritional studies concerning dried fruit in general, it has been shown that the walnut in particular plays a very important role in the well-being of our metabolism due to its contribution of polyunsaturated fatty acids (Omega-3) and the antioxidants (Vitamin E, polyphenols) in which it is rich. Daily use of walnuts reduces "bad" cholesterol, improves cardiovascular health, and contributes to the reduction of oxidative stress.



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