

Collana Tropea e dintorni
4.

TRADITIONAL
RECIPES
FROM TROPEA *and*
NEARBY

TRANSLATION BY ELISABETH LEFFLER

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M.G.E.
MELIGRANA GIUSEPPE EDITORE



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Traditional recipes from Tropea and nearby
Collana Tropea e dintorni. 4

Italian title: *Le antiche ricette di Tropea e dintorni*, M.G.E., Tropea, 2006

English Translation by *Elisabeth Leffler*

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1. April 2008

ISBN: 978-88-95031-14-9

Graphic design: Giuseppe Meligrana

INTRODUCTION

IN THE AGE OF AGGRESSIVE GLOBALISATION OF EATING HABITS, OF FAST FOOD AND MEALS WHICH ARE READY IN FIVE MINUTES, OF FROZEN FOODS AND MULTI-ETHNIC CUISINE IT IS NO EASY THING TO WRITE A BOOK ABOUT THE TRADITIONAL RECIPES OF ONE'S HOMETOWN. IN FACT, WE CAN SEE THE INEXORABLE DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL LOCAL CUISINES WHILE WHEREVER WE LOOK, WHILE A UNIFORM GLOBALISED FOOD CULTURE TAKES ITS PLACE. THE GLOBALISATION OF FOOD CULTURE MEANS THAT ALL OVER THE WORLD PEOPLE EAT THE SAME FOOD, PREPARED IN THE SAME WAY, FOLLOWING THE SAME DIETARY PATTERN.

SO I ASKED MYSELF, WHAT IS THE REAL POSITION OF TRADITIONAL COOKERY IN TROPEA AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD?

THE AREA AROUND TROPEA IS IN THE MIDDLE OF CALABRIA ON THE TYRRHENIAN COAST OF THE PROVINCE OF VIBO VALENTIA. THE AREA INCLUDES SEVERAL VILLAGES AND SMALL TOWNS - WITH A TOTAL POPULATION OF SEVERAL THOUSAND - INCLUDING PARGHELIA, RICADI, DRAPIA, SPILINGA, CARIA, ZAMBRONE, ZACCANOPOLI, JOPPOLO AND OTHERS. IT IS HILLY IN PARTS, REACHING A HEIGHT OF 700 METRES ON MONTE PORDO, WHILST OTHER PARTS ARE COASTAL. THE TYPES OF LOCAL PRODUCTS AND THE GASTRONOMICAL TRADITIONS REFLECT THIS VARIETY, BEING TIED BOTH TO RURAL PASTORAL HILLSIDE VILLAGES AND TO SEASIDE FISHING VILLAGES AND TOWNS; THE RANGE IS WIDE AND DIVERSE. THE TERRITORY IS, HOWEVER, QUITE SMALL AND SO THE TRADITIONAL CUISINES SHOW LITTLE VARIATION BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT PLACES OF ORIGIN. BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT REALITIES, LONG STANDING HABITS OF EXCHANGE OF PRODUCE AND RECIPES HAVE MEANT THAT TRADITIONAL COOKERY IN THIS LITTLE PROVINCE IS BASICALLY UNIFORM.

IN THE AREA IN AND AROUND TROPEA THE GRADUAL REDUCTION IN TRADITIONAL COOKERY BEGAN AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR. HOWEVER, IN THIS AREA TIME-HONoured RECIPES STILL PERSIST, DESPITE GLOBALISATION. THIS IS PROBABLY DUE TO THE INFLUENCE OF TOURISM SINCE BOTH TOURISTS AND THE LOCAL POPULATION ENJOY THE NUMEROUS DISHES AND PRODUCTS WHICH HAVE SURVIVED THE AGGRESSION OF PROGRESS.

THIS BOOK AIMS AT HELPING TOURISTS TO ENJOY THE FLAVOURS OF DISHES DISCOVERED IN OUR SPLENDID TERRITORY. OUR CUISINE, WHICH FOLLOWS THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET, IS HEALTHY AND UNADULTERATED, GUARANTEERING A LONG, HEALTHY LIFE. WE LIVE IN AN INTERMEDIATE PERIOD IN WHICH ALL THAT IS GLOBAL HAS NOT YET OVERCOME EVERYTHING AND WE CAN CONSIDER OURSELVES FORTUNATE THAT WE CAN STILL SAVOUR THE FLAVOURS OF BY-GONE DISHES AND OLD TIME PRODUCTS WHICH, MAYBE, ONE DAY, MAYBE, WILL NO LONGER EXIST.

CURED MEATS, CHEESE, FRIED FOODS and SIDE DISHES

IN THIS AREA THE TRADITION OF PREPARING VARIOUS FORMS OF CURED MEATS IS VERY OLD. MOST OF THESE LOCAL PRODUCTS ARE MADE FROM PORK AND THE MAJORITY CONTAIN VERY SPICY PEPPER. THIS SERVED TO REDUCE THE PERIOD OF SEASONING BUT ALSO TO GIVE FLAVOUR AND AROMA TO THE TASTE AND SMELL OF STORED MEAT WHICH - IN A WARM CLIMATE SUCH AS OURS - ARE THE NATURAL CONSEQUENCES OF STORAGE. NOWADAYS, LOCAL CURED MEAT PRODUCTS ARE CONSIDERED AMONG THE BEST EXAMPLES OF LOCAL GASTRONOMY. THEY ARE WIDELY APPRECIATED BY TOURISTS BUT ALSO BY THE LOCALS WHO WILL RARELY BE WITHOUT SOME SORT OF CURED MEAT IN THEIR HOMES.

LOCAL CHEESES ALSO FORM PART OF THE TRADITIONAL FOOD. CHEESE PRODUCTION IS CONNECTED WITH THE PLATEAU OF MONTE DORO WHERE NUMEROUS HERDS OF COWS, SHEEP AND GOATS ARE PASTURED. ORGANIC FARMING TECHNIQUES MEAN THAT THE ANIMALS ARE KEPT IN THE OPEN AIR AND THIS GIVES THE MILKS USED FOR CHEESE AN EXCEPTIONAL FLAVOUR. WHILST FOREIGN CHEESES COMPETE WITH LOCAL CHEESE, THE LATTER KEEP THEIR OWN AND CAN BE FOUND AS PART OF AN HORS D'OEUVRES OR AS THE CULMINATING DISH OF A MEAL. TOURISTS ENJOY THE RICH FLAVOURS AND GENUINE TASTE OF OUR CHEESE.

AS ELSEWHERE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA, THE CUISINE THE CUISINE OF THE AREA AROUND TROPEA MAKES WIDE USE OF FRYING TECHNIQUES. AMONGST THE FRIED FOODS MOST LOVED IN THIS AREA ARE THE "VRASCIOLA" (MEATBALLS) AND FRITTERS. ZEPPOLE (SIMILAR TO DOUGHNUTS) ARE A TRADITIONAL FESTIVE FOOD. THE WONDERFUL FLAVOURS OF THESE TRADITIONAL DISHES MAKE THEM AMONG THE MOST USED WITH THE YOUNGER GENERATION AND THUS LEAST AT RISK FROM THE GLOBALISATION OF COOKERY.

AMONGST THE MOST POPULAR SIDE DISHES ARE THE LOCAL SALADS. THE MILD CLIMATE AND THE LOCAL SOIL PRODUCE DELICIOUS RED ONIONS, TOMATOES AND PEPPERS. THE SALADS ARE USED AS SIDE DISHES, AS SECOND COURSES AND EVEN AS A COMPLETE MEAL. TOURISTS HAVE LEARNT TO APPRECIATE THE TRUE VALUE OF A SALAD PREPARED USING FRESH LOCAL PRODUCTS FOLLOWING OLD TIME RECIPES.

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