



Imagined Menu

*Quanno tu mangiavi cor pensiero...**

A project by Leone Contini, Amsterdam 2013

'Imagined Menu' consists of a selection of regional recipes that were collected by Italian war-prisoners in the Cellelager POW camp in northern Germany during the First World War. The recipes are handwritten in two small notebooks titled 'B98' and 'Ricettario Culinare n.2'.

The name of the first notebook, 'B98', is derived from the block and number of the barrack where the cookbook was written. The camp was divided in four blocks and block B and D were separated from block A and C by a long avenue; the prisoners gave it the name 'Viale della fame' ('Hunger Avenue').

Notebook 'B98' is 10 by 15 cm, has 58 pages with hand drawn lines and includes 116 recipes. The recipes are arranged in different sections that are chosen with different criteria than those of the contemporary Italian cuisine: panini (bread), bocconcini (delicacies or snacks), crostini d'antipasto (appetizers of crostini), antipasti (appetizers), zuppe di pesce (fish soups), salse-galantine (sauces-jellies), polentine (polenta), primi (first courses) and riso (rice).

The second notebook is called 'Ricettario Culinare n.2' which means in English 'Culinary Cookbook no.2', it is 11 by 9 cm and has 54 yellow pages with hand drawn blue lines and counts 129 recipes. The recipes follow each other without any specific order with regards to the usual composition of a dinner, although they are numbered; antipasti (appetizers), primi (first courses), secondi (main courses) and dolci (desserts) are randomly alternated.

The text reproduced in this 'menu' is true to the original writing in the notebooks, including errors, abbreviations and various dialects.

**Quanno tu mangiavi cor pensiero...* is a quotation from a poem written in Cellelager by a prisoner from the region Lazio. The dialect seems grammatically odd in Italian and could be translated into English as 'When we ate with our minds' or 'When we ate thoughts'.

Panini Cremonesi – Impasta farina di frumento con acqua e sale, poco strutto e poco zafferano, stemperando il pastone in modo da renderlo tenerissimo – forma ovale con un intacca al centro. [*Taccuino 'B98'; sezione 'panini'*]

Tortellini di San Biagio, Napoli – Impasta fior di farina con farina d'orzo, semi di finocchio e lievito comune. Fanne delle ciambelle schiacciate e manda al forno. [*Taccuino 'B98'; sezione 'panini'*]

Panini from Cremona – Knead wheat flour with water and salt, add some lard and saffron, soften the mash to make it very tender. Oval shape with a notch at the center. [*Notebook 'B98'; section 'panini'*]

Saint Blaise's bread, Naples – Knead fine flour with barley flour, fennel seeds and common yeast. Create crushed donuts and place them in the oven. [*Notebook 'B98'; section 'bread'*]

Salsa verde di melanzane – Prendi delle melanzane, tagliale a metà e dà loro una mezza cottura al forno. Tritale poi con cipolla, prezzemolo, pomodoro fresco ed acciughe con molto olio – spalma su crostini. (volendo servire in piatto aggiungi barbabietole e pomodoro a spicchi fritto in graticola). [*Taccuino 'B98'; sezione 'crostini d'antipasto'*]

Soppressata – Si lessa ½ testa di majale, una zampa, la coda, ½ kg cotenna. Il tutto si spolpa e si taglia a pezzi. Indi si condisce con sale pepe, prezzemolo, aglio e s'insacca (in un sacco di tela, grandezza di un salame grande) ben pressata, legandola esternamente e stretta con spago. Si lascia per alcuni giorni ad asciugare al tetto della cucina – dopo di che è pronta servendo a fette come salame. [*Taccuino 'Ricettario Culinare n. 2'; pietanza n. 68*]

Panzanella – Prendi fette di pane o gallette e fatte spugnare bene nell'acqua mettile in piatto e condisci con olio sale e pepe e aceto se vuoi. Sopra metti acciughe, pomodoro verde a spicchi, prezzemolo e basilicò. [*Taccuino 'B98'; sezione 'bocconcini'*]

Green eggplant sauce – Take some eggplants, cut them and bake them slightly in the oven. Mince them with onion, parsley, fresh tomatoes, anchovies and a lot of olive oil. Spread on the crostini. (If you serve it on a dish then add beets and tomatoes, sliced and fry on a grill). [*Notebook 'B98'; section 'appetizers of crostini'*]

Soppressata – Boil ½ pork head, a paw and a tail, and ½ kg rind. Strip the flesh off and cut it into pieces. Season with salt, pepper, parsley, garlic and bag it (in a canvas bag, the size of a large salami), press it firmly and tie it tight from the outside with a string. Leave it hanging at the kitchen ceiling for a couple of days, so it can dry. Then it is ready to serve as salami slices. [*Notebook 'Ricettario Culinare n. 2'; recipe n. 68*]

Panzanella – Take slices of bread and let them soak in water. Add oil and season with salt, pepper and vinegar if you want. Put on top of the bread anchovies, green tomato slices, parsley and basil. [*Notebook 'B98'; section 'delicacies or snacks'*]

Chicken giblets sauce – Take chicken giblets, ham, bacon, sauteed mushrooms, raisins, pine nuts and pickled peppers and make a pesto. Then put it in a pan with butter, onion, parsley, salt and pepper. Dilute with Marsala wine or dense boiled grape must. Serve it on crostini with truffle slices. [*Notebook 'B98'; section 'appetizers of crostini'*]

Salsa di rigaglie di pollo – Prendi interiori di pollo, prosciutto, pancetta di majale, funghi già soffritti, uva passa, pinoli e peperoni sott'aceto e fanne un pesto che metti a soffriggere con burro, cipolla, prezzemolo, sale e pepe, allungandolo con vino, marsala o mosto cotto-denso servilo su crostini con tartufi a fette.
[Taccuino 'B98'; sezione 'crostini d'antipasto']

Risotto alla Milanese – Fai sciogliere e soffriggere in una casseruola gr. 50 di midollo di bue e burro con cipolla tritata e passa questo soffritto al colino – rimettilo nella casseruola e buttavi dentro il riso (½ kg.) facendolo arrosolare con cura; versa sopra il riso due dita di marsala e versa quindi rimescolando sempre dell'acqua bollente – meglio brodo – approssimandosi la cottura sciogli in una goccia d'acqua calda il contenuto di ½ scatola di zafferano e versa nel risotto. A cottura ultimata condiscilo con burro e formaggio ed un poco di raschiatura di noce moscata. (Sulla stessa maniera si confezionano quasi tutti i risotti, cambiando però ora i soffritti ed ora i condimenti ed aggiungendo oppure no carne trit. ed altro).
[Taccuino 'B98'; sezione 'riso']

Culigiones Sardo – Fai la sfoglia con farina, acqua e sale e tagliala in modo da farne piccoli panzerotti che riempirai con: formaggio fresco – di giornata – lattiginoso impastato con verdura tenera – spinace – già lessa, e poco zucchero. Lessati si condiscono con burro e formaggio ovvero con sugo. Al posto di formaggio fresco puoi mettere ricotta.

Milanese Risotto – Melt and fry 50 grams of ox marrow and butter into a saucepan with chopped onion. Strain through a colander and put it back into the saucepan, add the rice (½ kg) and bake it brown carefully, pour two fingers of Marsala wine over the rice, then keep pouring hot water – preferably broth – while stirring the rice. Melt in a drop of warm water a ½ box of saffron and pour it into the rice. Once it is cooked season it with butter and cheese and a little bit of fresh nutmeg. (In the same way almost all kinds of risotto are prepared, varying only 'soffritto', seasoning and adding minced meat, different meat or no meat at all.) *[Notebook 'B98'; section 'rice']*

Sardinian dumplings – Make the filo dough with flour, water and salt and cut it in the form of little dumplings that you fill with: very fresh cream cheese mixed with tender vegetables, – spinach – already boiled, and a little sugar. Once boiled, season with butter and cheese or sauce. Instead of the cream cheese you can put ricotta. Instead of boiling them you can fry them, in that case you have to mix the dough with oil. *[Notebook 'B98'; section 'first courses']*

Macaroni from Friuli – Put melted butter in a pan with the anchovies, add salt and pepper, cook and dress the macaroni in the pot.
[Notebook 'B98'; section 'first courses']

Invece di prepararli lessi puoi friggerli ed allora bisogna stemperare la pasta della sfoglia con olio. [Taccuino 'B98'; sezione 'primi']

Maccheroni alla Friulana – Metti a soffriggere con burro liquefatto delle acciughe con sale e pepe – cotto condisci i maccheroni in piatto. [Taccuino 'B98'; sezione 'primi']

Caciucco alla livornese – Prendi polipi, triglie grosse, totani, granchi e cefali, falli a pezzi e metti a cuocere in questa salsa: soffriggi in olio dell'aglio, peperoni rossi ed aggiungi conserva o salsa di pom. Fai restringere ed aggiungi il pesce a cuocere (abbisognando versa acqua calda). [Taccuino 'B98'; sezione 'zuppe di pesce']

Cipolle e zucchette (lunghe) ripiene – A parte trita carne e impastala con pane gratt., formaggio gratt., prezzemolo, sale e pepe. Riempi quindi le cipolle le zucchette, già pulite e vuotate. Li arrosolerai bene con olio. Trita la vuotatura delle cipolle e delle zucchette. Friggila con olio spesso in cui furono cotte prima cipolle e zucchine. A cottura quasi completa, aggiungerai della salsa di pomodoro e quindi vi farai ultimare la cottura delle cipolle o zucch. Più semplicemente le potrai riempire con acciughe, capperi, ulive e panegratt. facendole cuocere al forno in tegame a strati alternandoli con cacio a fette, latte, burro, panegratt. e qualche ovo sbattuto con formaggio e patate. [Taccuino 'Ricettario Culinare n. 2'; pietanza n. 23]

Fish soup from Livorno – Get octopus, large mullets, squids, crabs and grey mullets and cut them into pieces. Cook the following sauce: fry in oil garlic, red pepper and add canned or fresh tomato sauce. Add the fish and cook (add hot water when necessary). [Notebook 'B98'; section 'fish soups']

Stuffed onions and (long) zucchini – Chop the meat and knead it with breadcrumbs, grated cheese, parsley, salt and pepper. Fill the onions and zucchini, already cleaned and emptied. Brown it with oil. Chop the pulp of onions and zucchini. Fry it with the thick oil that you have used to cook onion and zucchini. When the cooking is almost done you add the tomato sauce and then finish cooking the onions and zucchini. In a more straightforward way, you can fill it with anchovies, capers, olives and bread crumbs and cook them in the oven in a pan in alternating layers with cheese slices, milk, butter, bread crumbs and some scrambled egg with cheese and potatoes. [Notebook 'Ricettario Culinare n. 2'; recipe n. 23]

Brustengolo di Perugia – Con farina gialla fai a caldo una polentina densa con zucchero abbondante e mandorle con uva passa e fichi secchi triti. Mettila in una padella unta, a forma di torta (alta due-tre dita). Cuoci al forno sino ad ottenere la crosta (puoi anche aggiungere miele o marmellata). Curare perché non si attacchi alla padella. [*Taccuino 'B98'; sezione 'polentine'*]

Riso nero (siciliano) – Metti del riso in acqua bollente ed a mezza cottura togliilo dal fuoco ed asciugalo. Rimettilo poscia a bollire con cioccolata sciolta nel latte o nel caffè caldo. La cioccolata deve essere molto densa – Prima della cottura del riso aggiungi pinoli, canditi a pezz., mandorle e noci tritate, scorza di limone gratt. Si serve in piattini da caffè abbellendosi superiormente con granelli di zucchero e chicchi di riso lessati. (Invece della cioccolata potrai usare mosto cotto). [*Taccuino 'B98'; sezione 'antipasti'*]

Brustengolo from Perugia – Take corn flour prepare a hot dense polenta with plenty of sugar and almonds with raisins and chopped dried figs. Put it in a greased pan, pie-shaped (2, 3 fingers high). Bake in the oven until you get the crust (you can also add honey or jam). Be careful that it doesn't stick to the pan. [*Notebook 'B98'; section 'polenta'*]

Black rice (from Sicily) – Put the rice in boiling water, when it is half-cooked remove it from the heat and dry it. Afterwards boil it again with chocolate melted in milk or coffee. The chocolate should be very thick. Just before the rice is completely cooked add pine nuts, candied fruit, almonds and chopped walnuts and grated lemon rind. Serve in saucers for coffee, decorated with sugar grains and grains of boiled rice. (Instead of chocolate you can use cooked must). [*Notebook 'B98'; section 'appetizers'*]

Cellelager, Germany 1917–1918; Palma di Montechiaro, Sicily 1919–1990; Firenze 1991–2013; Amsterdam 2013.

Giosuè Fiorentino was the cousin of my grandfather from my mother's side. We never met since he passed away in the village where he was born, Palma di Montechiaro, Sicily, just a few months after I was born in Firenze. I have, however, very intense memories of his house where, throughout my childhood, we used to spend the summer holidays. There I experienced the 'density' of the past. In the silent penumbra of its vast rooms, the flow of time seemed to have stopped, resting on the objects of the ancestors, accumulated since the mid-nineteenth century until the death of my uncle, in the late 1970s. These fragments of European and family history remained for another fifteen years undisturbed, until the house was sold in 1990.

Suddenly the objects were torn from the house and dispersed: they were brought to Firenze and split between my mother, her brother and her sister.

Thanks to the archival accuracy of my mother's sister, I came to know about the material on which this project is based: two notebooks of yellowed paper – one of them almost falling apart – thickly handwritten, signed Giosuè Fiorentino, years 1917 and 1918, location Cellelager.

In October 1917, the worst Italian military debacle of WWI took place. The battle was named after the town of Caporetto, on the north-eastern border, and it was remembered as 'the breakdown of Caporetto'; moreover the term Caporetto was incorporated into the Italian language as synonymous of 'defeat', and even today the word is used with this meaning. At that time Giosuè was an 18 year-old officer stationed near Caporetto. When the whole Italian front-line collapsed under the joint attack of the Germans and Austro-Hungarians, he was taken prisoner, just like tens of thousands of other Italian soldiers. Most likely, he was captured while trying to cross the Natisone River, near the city of Cividale, on October 27. For him the trench war was over. On November 4th he had his 19th birthday in Cellelager, in northern Germany.

Since the blame of the debacle was entirely placed on the alleged cowardice of the soldiers, many of those who eluded arrest and deportation were executed by the Italian General Staff on charges of cowardice, while the Italian State prohibited the delivery of essential supplies and goods for the war prisoners abroad.

The prisoners were completely abandoned and they experienced displacement, despair and starvation; many of them died, especially during the winter of 1917–1918.

The Lager of Celle hosted approximately 3000 prisoners. It was divided into 4 blocks (A, B, C and D) by 2 cross-roads. The main road that divided blocks A and C from blocks B and D, was called by the prisoners the 'Hunger Avenue'.

As we know from other prisoners' diaries, in Cellelager food was an obsessive desire and the subject of endless discussions. Speaking about food was maybe an attempt to turn a crowd of starving bodies into a community again, able to share memories from the golden age of peaceful times; an attempt to humanize hunger, to reframe this primary instinct into a sort of – however virtual – conviviality, a collective

action of cultural resistance. Giosuè collected these spoken recipes from his fellow prisoners. He probably asked them to write the recipes directly into his notebook: there are in fact different types of handwriting and various dialectal influences. Such idiosyncrasies enhance these personal records of intimate fragments from their previous lives, suddenly interrupted by the trauma of war and deportation. These memories, reassembled into two handmade notebooks, are a patchwork of regional cuisines, from Friuli to Sicily, an unintended ethnographic writing, picturing the cultural materiality of a very young 'imagined community', called Italy.

Today, former enemies are tied together within the common post-national EU institutions, and, one could say, the National State is declining under the pressure of flourishing trans-national belongings.

However, Europe is threatened by poverty and exclusion. The current (economic, social and political) crises undermine the European common narratives, the foundation of the supposedly imagined European Community.

Giosuè and his fellow prisoners' action of virtual resistance, conceived in the deep darkness of the First World War by an exiled and starving community, will be turned into a real, collective action. After almost 96 years, on April 7 2013 it is finally enacted in the form of a Sunday lunch.

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