



06-Traditional local products

There is a wide range of genuine and very tasty local products on sale at the shops and restaurants in the Locana area. Plain simple food, traditional recipes, typical of the hard mountain life and its people. Wild soft fruits for baking tarts, herbs and chestnuts for omelettes and soups, mushrooms as a side dish.

And speaking of mushrooms, make sure you try the needle mushrooms, (*Polyporus frondosus*) locally called “Querin”, celebrated with a local festival during the last week in September. This marvellous mushroom has a round fronded shape composed of a mass of tiny fine needles. Well-known and appreciated since ancient Roman times, this mushroom grows among the roots of broad-leaved trees, mainly under chestnut trees where the mycelium flourishes even for centuries. The local people recognise the right spots, and once they have discovered them, they keep the secret well guarded !!.

Like the ingredients, the recipes in these mountains are plain and strong: bean soup with pork rind, pork liver with herbs and black pudding, semolina soup, and other recipes invented because of food scarcity, like sweet and salty bread crust or bread soup. Because as we know, mountain villages are not rich... And just as well that a few hundred years ago corn and potatoes reached the mountains from the new world! These products not only saved the mountain people from starvation, but gradually became part of the local gastronomy as if they had always existed

And of course, there is polenta with meat stews, mushrooms, or with pumpkin, otherwise it can be served alla “concia”, with melted butter and cheese, while potatoes are served with stew, mixed with vegetable soups and maccheroni. Added flavour comes from brus, a cheese obtained from ricotta, made with verœcòl, or ricotta whey, and with buœrèt, the whey that remains after butter has been made. These products are even mixed into some of the local sausage or salami...just to save a bit on the meat.....

Another familiar animal in the mountain villages is the goat: able to leap about among the rocks, goats do not need to be taken up to pasture and they produce excellent milk with a very low cholesterol content. This milk makes exquisite cheeses, both soft and matured: the tumin. And when goats can no longer be milked, the meat is eaten: goat stew with the inevitable polenta, or traditional salami served with potatoes, and then again- mocetta, a type of lean and very tasty salted meat.

Mocette and salami or sausage meats can also be made from beef, and sometimes also from donkey meat. Then naturally, we cannot forget pork and wild boar: the best of all for sausage meat. The so-called duja salami is preserved in fat, while the struncàda is a special type of salted meat preserved in an earthenware container with salt, mountain herbs and honey.

But wait! There is also wonderful lard flavoured with strong mountain herbs or hazel nuts, and the local pancetta bacon flavoured with garlic.

Honey from the local hives is particularly strong in flavour: during the third week in July a honey festival is held in Pratalungo, where you can buy jars of nuts and hazelnuts in honey, made to local recipes.

Last of all, the milk from the cows that graze on alpine pastures full of tasty herbs and flowers, produces ricotta, butter, brus and wonderful cheeses, above all the famous Gran Paradiso toma. The so-called red-rind toma from the upper Orco valley, has been famous since 1475, when a certain Pantaleone da Confienza dedicated a whole chapter to this toma in his treatise on cheeses from Piedmonte.