



Aspromonte National Park



EXPO and REGIONS

FROM THE PROTECTION
OF BIODIVERSITY
TO THE QUALITY PRODUCTIONS

Paddaccio, cacioni, tritico and lampascioni. And more, lucanica, pappaluni, giuraje, farrate, solina, gruttazzo. Strange names, often ancient and mostly unknown, but hiding extraordinary cheeses, delicious desserts, rare vegetables, exquisite sausages, old cereals. In other words one of the most precious treasures of Italy: our excellent food.

What few people know is that many of these delicacies are produced and guarded in the Italian's Parks, where protected nature and human labor have been inextricably linked since thousands of years. Some of these products were already part of the typical regional cuisines, others have been saved from extinction and are back on the tables thanks to the tenacity of expert farmers whose work has been promoted and supported by their own parks and local administrations.

What comes out is a scenario characterized by tastefulness, healthy food and local agricultural traditions which are perfectly bound together with natural landscapes and flora and fauna conservation.

From the protection of biodiversity to quality productions: **Expo and Regions** is an initiative designed to discovery Italian gastronomic delights and to connect Milan Expo with small villages, fields and kitchens of Italian families. A journey across the places where food is produced, across our

cultural and natural heritage, across Italian traditions and warm hospitality. But it is also the story of the connection between each local product with its territory: history, art, lifestyle. This initiative will allow us to discover over 80 high quality products, many different flavors and many different regions, all rich in beauty and valuable natural diversity.

The initiative is coordinated by the President of the Council of Ministers - Department for Cohesion Policies and performed with the operational support of Invitalia, the National Agency for inward investment and economic development. The project involves all the Italian regions which have conceived a local package, and five ministries: Foreign Affairs; Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies; Heritage, Cultural Heritage Activities and Tourism; Education, Universities and Research; Environment and Protection of Land and Sea.

ASPROMONTE

★ THE PARK ★

A magic place where is it possible to walk looking at the sea, the Etna volcano and Sicily. The Aspromonte National Park has beautiful natural surroundings: the Great Stones Valley (Pietra di Febo, Pietra Cappa, Pietra Lunga, Rocca del Drago), the rivers, the wood populated by wolves, Italian roe deer, wild cats. Since the last century, a territory of outlaws and kidnappings, which found its strength and redemption thanks to the establishment of the Aspromonte National Park.

The Park covers an area of 64,544 hectares and includes 37 municipalities. Many mysteries, legends, fairs, ghost towns characterize this area which still preserves the ancient traces of Greek culture. Many villages, like Africo, still follows the ancient greek language and traditions. A landscape rich in beauty and culture, that can achieve an economic development focusing on tourism and outdoor activities, such as horse riding and hiking, wine tasting and local food experiences, thanks to the many products and ingredients that have influenced this mountainous peninsula.

For instance, the soft *musulupu* cheese from sheep and goat milk; the *pappaluni* beans, a tasty and tender variety; the white wheat bread, with an intense and sour aroma, made with wheat flour often mixed with dark rye flour. Chestnuts, used to prepare the flour for the typical “castagnaccio” dessert. The potatoes used as a side dish for goat meat or onion soup: the “Bellina”, round and white; the “Spunta”, with a long shape and with a yellow or white flesh, ideal for frying or baking; the “Rosa” potato, with a white/pale pink color, good for sweet or savory preparations, like gnocchi or crepes.

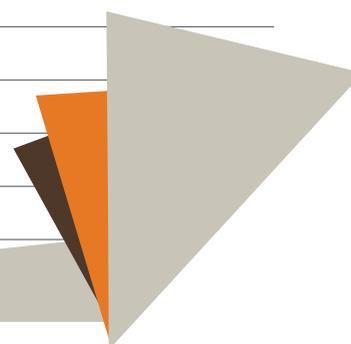
www.parcoaspromonte.gov.it





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ASPROMONTE

★THE PRODUCTS★

Extra virgin olive oil

The list of local and foreign cultivars that adapted to climatic conditions of Calabria include Coratina, Frantoio, Leccino, Nocellara del Belice and Messina,

Carolea, Cassanese, Dolce di Rossano, Roggianella, Large Gerace, Ottobratica and Sinopolese. From all these varieties originate several extra virgin olive oils characterized by various organoleptic properties, an aromatic fruity and vegetable scent and delicate notes of almond or hazelnut. The Park preserves an ancient tradition of olive growing, widespread throughout Calabria and witnessed by many cultivated lands and the remains of several mills along the rivers.

Despite its major agricultural extension, Calabria has not been able to produce a high quality oil. Farmers often carry on a dated olive-growing practice. Fortunately, something is changing especially along the coast and some considerable olive grower are now producing an excellent oil.

Passito Greco di Bianco

A real delightful wine, considered by experts one of the oldest wine in Italy, is produced in the village of Bianco and Casignana, in the Reggio Calabria province: the Passito Greco di Bianco. This area has calcareous and white soils, which create a structured, alcoholic and strong wines.

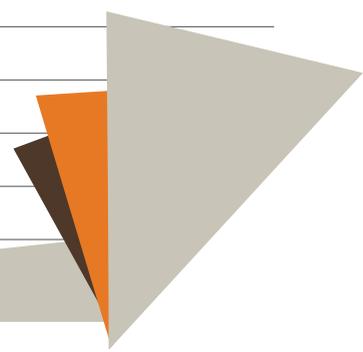
Very few still use the traditional drying method on the “cannizze” (stranded barrels).

In September, grapes are placed over the barrels and left to dry for 8 to 15 days. From 100 kilograms, 30 liters of Passito are produced. Best ageing is 3-4 years. Ideal for drinking cold or at room temperature, with desserts or ice cream.

Wheat bread

It is very common within the Aspromonte National Park to find bakeries with wood oven which produce large loaf, one or two kilos, with a round or oval shape and a cross cut on crust. Usually it is made using starter, refreshed every day. The white wheat flour is often mixed with dark rye flour, called “iermano” or “iurmano”. Thanks to the old fashioned natural baking method and the wood oven baking, the result is a bread with an intense aroma, crisp and not chewy, with a hint of sour. In the past it was not easy to find bread made with white flour: in Aspromonte, in fact, sweet corn, chestnuts and rye breads were mainly produced. It was also common to see the “wheat bread” signs nearby the bakeries of the villages, showing that this kind of bread was produced.

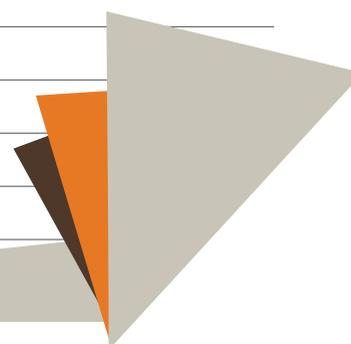






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ASPROMONTE

★ THE PRODUCTS ★

Aspromonte chestnuts

Chestnuts are grown in Aspromonte since ancient times and are now considered as a typical food product that characterizes the gastronomic culture of the Gallico valley.

Before rural depopulation, chestnut was considered the main food in the farmers' diet, as it is very nutritious and rich, and can be used either as a fruit or flour. The chestnut was also called "bread tree" because it was entirely used: from the leaves to the branches, from its fruits to the flowers (the famous chestnut honey). This is the reason why the chestnut was also called "bread of the poor" as it was the basic element of the mountain economy.

In Calabria, from Aspromonte to Pollino, the most productive varieties are the "Lucente", the "Giacchettara", the "Curcia", the "Nserta" (round shape and medium size), appreciated for their organoleptic properties. The "Riggiola", oval and slightly flattened, is excellent when dried, candied or used for recipes such as chestnuts must. The "Mamma" and "Selvatico di Cenadi" are excellent varieties of chestnuts wood. Harvested from September to November, chestnuts can be eaten fresh or dried, raw, boiled or roasted. Most popular autumnal fruit, can be used as main ingredient for appetizers, desserts, and very appreciated traditional dishes. Chestnuts flour can be used to prepare the "*pitticelle*" (pancakes), buns and bread. Because of its importance for implementing local economy and tourism, a chestnut museum has been created in Cerva (CZ).

Aspromonte potatoes

Roasted, baked or grilled, as a side dish for goat meat or as ingredient for the onion soup. Potatoes have always been part of the Calabrian cuisine and of the entire mountain cuisine. Climate conditions facilitated in fact the cultivation of legumes and potatoes.

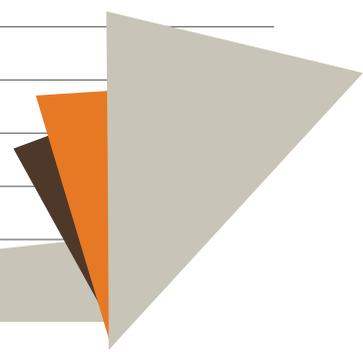
The varieties grown in the inner part of the Park are the "Bellina", round and white, excellent when boiled, and the "Spunta", with a long shape and with a yellow or white flesh, ideal for frying or baking. Shepherds from Aspromonte used to bake the "Spunta" potato with the skin under the embers, then seasoned with oil, salt and chili.

Another variety is the "Rosa" potato, smaller than the "Spunta", with a white/pale pink color, good for sweet or savory preparations, like gnocchi or crepes (made with flour and boiled potatoes, fried and seasoned with sugar or honey).



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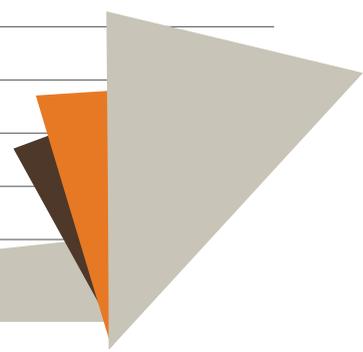
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ASPROMONTE

★ THE PRODUCTS ★

Bergamot

This citrus, with a skin similar to a small orange, has chosen Calabria, in particular the part nearby Reggio, in front of the Strait, as its favorite region. Someone use-

lessly tried to replant it elsewhere: Spain, Ivory Coast, California and even in the Comoros Island and in the Formosa Island. Nothing happened! Bergamot, tenacious and faithful, only grows in here. Its color ranges from green to yellow, depending on the ripening. The skin is thin and smooth, and the weight of each fruit varies from 80 to 200 grams. Three varieties are grown: “Femminello”, with slender branches and smooth fruits, “Castagnaro”, more vigorous, with rough skin, and “Fantastico”, which is the main variety produced (about 75% of the total).

This fruit contains 10 to 15 slices. Its flower, called “zàgara” (from the arabic word zahara) is made of five white perfumed petals.

Bergamot begins to bloom in late March in sunny areas next to the sea while blooms during April in the inner areas. It is harvested from October to December. Thanks to its sour taste and intense aroma, is widely used in the local gastronomic tradition from liquor to syrups, from candied fruit to citric acid. It is also used for pharmaceutical products and its peel is even more important as produces the so-called “green gold”: an fine essential oil used to create fragrances. From 1.500 bergamots one kilogram of essence is extracted. There are many curiosities related to its history and its use. For instance, the famous *Bergamotes di Nancy* candies, invented in 1857, are produced with the Calabrian bergamot. Since 1830 Mr Earl Grey put on the market a tea flavored with bergamot from Calabria: the Twinings Earl Grey Tea, which is still one of the most popular tea worldwide. The peel is used to realize the typical snuffboxes of Varapodio, handmade containers once used to flavor tobacco. In 1999, the bergamot essential oil from Reggio Calabria obtained the PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) certification.

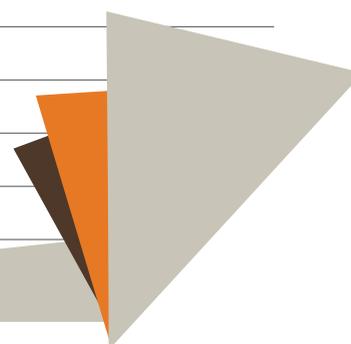
Capocollo

Capocollo (in english neck-head) is a salami whose name comes from the parts of the pig used to produce it, all located between head and the back. The cut of fresh product, weighing 3-4 kilos, must be surrounded by a layer of fat which keeps it soft during ripening. The presence of fat is at a low percentage, making it a rather light sausage, compared to the traditional pork ones. The meat is dry salted on alternate days for a week, then wet with wine (or vinegar), massaged and pressed. At the end red pepper and herbs (often wild fennel) are added, then the *Capocollo* is wrapped in the diaphragm of pork. The sausage is tied with twine and rods and the bowel is riddled to prevent air bubbles. After the short smoking process, the *Capocollo* is left to dry and mature in a well aired room at constant temperature and humidity for about 15 weeks. When cut, the sausage has a natural pinky color, with small streaks of fat. The flavor, delicate, evolves with ageing.



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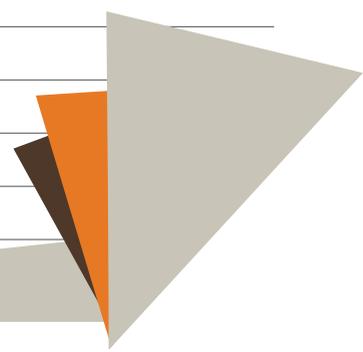
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★ THE PRODUCTS ★

Musulupu cheese

Traditional cheese with a greek-albanian origin, the *musulupu* or *musulucu* is produced from March to September in the villages of Locride area, on the eastern side of the Aspromonte massif, in the province of

Reggio Calabria. According to an ancient tradition the *Musulupu* nickname derives from the greek language spoken in ancient times in this area, with the meaning of “wolf bites”.

Typical of this cheese-making process are the “*musulupare*”: wooden molds into which the milk clot was placed. These can take different female forms, such as teats or women’s profile.

The *musulupare* are hand-carved and take inspiration from the Mother Earth cult, which was worshiped by the greek-orthodox culture: according to popular belief, each year farmers could get a good harvest and good products, such as cheese.

The *Musulupu* is obtained from sheep and goats milk raised on pasture. It is a fresh cheese, no seasoning, lasts a few days and is eaten with seasonal vegetables, grated on pasta or as a basic ingredient for traditional sweets.

Ciminà caciocavallo cheese

Ciminà is a village of 700 inhabitants located in the Locride area, within the Aspromonte National Park. Its name comes from the greek word *kyminà*, a place rich in cumin, also called “*ciminaia*”. The cheese is produced in this area since ancient time. The typical “two headed” shape of this cheese, is closed with two knots which form two heads. The weight varies from 400 grams to 3 kilograms. The cheese is made with raw cow’s milk, sometimes with the addition of goat’s, which is almost always coagulated with kid’s rennet.

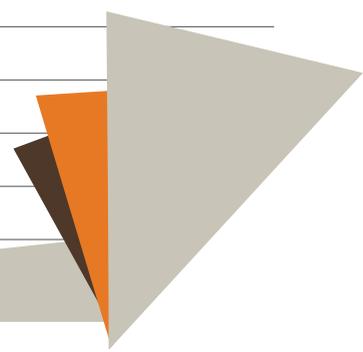
The curd (called *tuma* by shepherds) is cut into hazelnut-sized lumps, gathered together and left to ripen for a few days. It is then cut into slices and stretched in boiling water. The kneaded shapes soak in brine and are hung over a traditional pole to mature.

Ciminà Caciocavallo cheese got the Slow Food Presidium and is produced all year round, but the maximum production takes place from March to June. The minimum ageing period is one month.



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★ THE PRODUCTS ★

Canestrato dell'Aspromonte cheese

This cheese can be produced with sheep, goat or cow milk. The goat milk is generally made by Aspromonte goats, a native breed. The distinctive feature of this

cheese is that it uses only raw whole milk milked from animals reared in wide natural pastures, where the clean air merges with the herbs scents, giving *canestrato* its unique taste. Typical shape is cylindrical, about 7- 8 cm high with a diameter of 17-20 cm. The weight varies from 1 to 2 kilos, the ageing period is from 1 to 3 months, up to 1 year. After the ageing the crust should be compact with a yellow-brown or dark gray color, with stripes from the typical woven molds (*fucelle*) used during the processing. Sometimes, before making the *Canestrato* cheese, the curd is transformed into *juncata*, another traditional Calabrian cheese.

The Canestrato is mainly produced in the Tyrrhenian area of the Aspromonte massif, thanks to the many mountain meadows rich in grasses, leguminous plants and oat grass, typical of the Mediterranean bush.

Limina goat cheese

The goat cheese produced on the slopes of Mount Limina are obtained from native goat's milk and have a distinctive smell, a strong and spicy flavor that varies depending on the production period and the time of ageing.

Kid's rennet is added to milk and it is left to sit for one hour. Once the curd forms, it is stirred with a wooden spoon to break it up. The curd is then placed by hand in rush baskets and pressed to remove excess whey (called *lacciata*, the fat part of the milk). The cheese is removed from the mold, salted and placed back into the mold for a day, then removed and aged in a cellar. The rind is brushed with olive oil during the ageing period, which lasts from a few weeks to 12 months.

The Limina goat cheese is one of the Foodstuffs Italian list (PAT) products from the province of Reggio Calabria. The cheese is mainly used for the preparation of stuffed eggplant (typical dish of the mountain areas), can be also grated on homemade pasta or used as ingredient for meatballs and omelets.

Is a local high quality product, much sought-after by consumers but with a limited production unable to satisfy the demand. The color is straw yellow outside and white inside. The shape is round and the weight is 1 or 2 kilos. Can be eaten fresh or seasoned (from 8 to 12 months)

ASPROMONTE

★ THE PRODUCTS ★

Smoked ricotta

This fresh cheese has been produced in Calabria since ancient times and even today is made following the traditional process, which involves the use of steel boilers and heather wood spoons. In 2002 smoked ricotta obtained the P.A.T. designation (Traditional Agribusiness Product) and production in the Mammola village is carried on by small family farms, which preserve the ancient recipe. Originally, this cheese was made by shepherds and sold at the farmers market only once a week.

Mammola smoked ricotta is one of the most popular Calabrian smoked cheese. Its skin is dark, the color is beige or brown, sometimes dark brown, depending on the duration of the smoking process, the interior is ivory-white. It has a small cylinder shape of about 10-15 cm length, 4-5 cm of diameter.

It is prepared from November to July using the Aspromonte goat buttermilk, added with whole raw goat's milk. Its flavor is pleasantly smoky, delicate and slightly spicy. It is collected in traditional twig and left to drain for about one day. Dry salted and smoked for at least three days, is then aged for a week until it reaches the traditional shape and a weight of 200-300 grams.

Stockfish

Stockfish, the “fish that arrives where there is no sea”, has always been popular in the inner regions of Calabria. In the past, schooners and brigs from Northern Europe docked at the port of Pizzo, unloading bales of “fish stick” (stock-fish) dried on wooden branches, which went back up to the Aspromonte along the Serre road. Around the village of Mammola there was plenty of water rich in calcium, magnesium and iron, particularly suited to soak the stockfish. For this reason a local activity of dried fish processing has developed in this area. In the past stockfish was considered a poor dish, but after centuries of traditional cooking is now one of the ingredients of the typical food from Calabria.

The fish is not directly produced in Aspromonte, but is traditionally imported from Northern Europe and purchased by family farms of Locri, who rehydrate it through a process called “spugnatura” (sponge bath) and sell it as a tasty basic ingredient for traditional dishes. Fried, baked, stewed with potatoes or peppers, as salad or appetizer, stockfish is very appreciated thanks to its meat without bones.

A product that was traditionally used as a gift-exchange between farmer and landowner and even today, those who “come down from the North” over Christmas, bring stockfish as a present. Furthermore, is appreciated especially by new mums who believe that stockfish increases milk production.

In Mammola on the 9th August a local fair dedicated to this fish is organized.



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Aspromonte National Park

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