

# MANGIA PARCO



# National Park of Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga



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# 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.



The Park, located in the heart of the *Appennino*, spreads out through three regions: Abruzzo, Lazio and Marche, and five districts: L'Aquila, Teramo, Pescara, Rieti and Ascoli Piceno, as well as 44 municipalities.

The kingdom of the winds, wolves, foxes, hares, voles snow and butterflies. On top of the Centenario trail it isn't difficult to sight the Apennine chamois (*Rupicapra pyrenaica ornata*) which has reconquered its old habitat. And further down, along the fields, one can admire birds such as the shrike, the partridge and the buntings, and plants such as the cornflower, the *vaccaia* and the *androsace maximum* (included in the Red List of protected plants of the Abruzzo region).

These are some of the possibilities offered by the Gran Sasso Park, custodian of the highest mountain in the Appennino as well as lively cultural offerings. Around the Castel del Monte area there are archeological excavations of Colle della Battaglia, Rocca Calascio and S. Maria del Monte. By the old San Colombo di Barisciano convent there is a Flower Museum with a herbarium and a botanical garden one could visit.

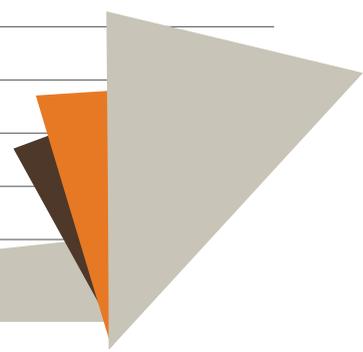
Getting to know this park means immersing oneself in a setting strongly marked by the presence of Medieval and Renaissance culture: from the wonderful Medici borough of Santo Stefano di Sessanio to Calascio, with its characteristic tower-houses dominated by the old fortress; from Castel del Monte, land of the transhumance, to the fortified borough of Carapelle Calvisio.

At higher altitudes one can explore, the great Campo Imperatore plateau, surrounded by the most elevated peaks of Gran Sasso and ancient rural landscapes. Example of which are the small fields of saffron - the spice which brought merchants from all over Europe to L'Aquila centuries ago. Another example are the open fields which have been around since Medieval times,

in which are harvested traditional grains such as the *Solina* wheat, the rye and beans such as the Castelvechio Calvisio grass pea and the Santo Stefano lentil. As well as the almond trees, the small valleys cultivated at 1500 meters of altitude, the massive terracing works on the mountainsides. The food products found in this high mountain Park reflect centuries of agriculture co-existing with the vertical environment and the transhumant breeding. Today they are a treasure of cultural and agricultural diversity.



[www.gransassolagapark.it](http://www.gransassolagapark.it)





## Aquila saffron (DOP)\*

The *Crocus sativus* - spring flower from which one gets the precious saffron - grows on the Navelli plateau, in the L'Aquila province, between 450 and 1.100 metres above sea level. The flower, just like the spice, is widespread

around the L'Aquila basin, which is home to a high quality production responsible for the DOP recognition of this saffron. It is one of the key ingredients in many typical dishes in the area and is known and used in important gastronomic preparations all around Italy and the world. Harvesting is still made by hand, as it once was. During the little hours of the day from the second half of October to the first



ten days of November, the harvesters cut the crocus flowers and lay them in wicker baskets. Other practiced and gentle hands separate the stamens from the rest of the flower. On a sieve, the centre of the crocus is left to dry over roverella charcoal, an oak species which grows easily in the area. After 15-20 minutes of "roasting", the stamens

are ready for the extraction of the sweet and aromatic orange dust. This is a very complicated and delicate process: 200 thousand flowers are necessary to obtain one kilo of saffron. The most elaborately manufactured products should be sold in stamens or threads but many agencies sell them in the well-known dust bags.

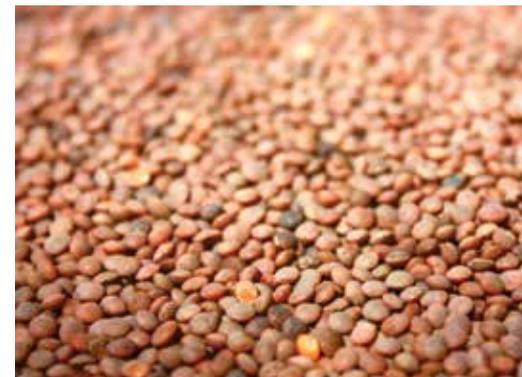
The plant comes from the Middle East and was allegedly brought to Italy around the 1300's. In Abruzzo - particularly in the Navelli plateau as well as the entire Aquilan basin - the techniques and skills necessary for the harvest and production of this refined spice have been preserved over time. This area's saffron is considered the best in the world and is known not only for its culinary virtues but for its medical ones. Nowadays, research is being made around its cell protective properties; in olden times it was used as a fine fabric dye as well as a hair dye for Ladies who wished to hide their white hair.

\* Protected Designation of Origin (PDO).

## Santo Stefano di Sessanio lentils

One of the most rustic lentils in Italy grows way above sea level: in Santo Stefano di Sessanio. In order to harvest it, one must climb up plateaus that go from 1200 to 1600 meters high on the slopes of Gran Sasso, in the Calascio, Barisciano, Castelvevchio Calvisio and Castel del Monte commons.

Some historic documents (Chronicon Vulturense) from Medieval times attest that these beans were already cultivated in this area before 1000 A.D.. It is a fact that the lentils - also known as "poor's meat" - represented a central role in the Apennini's peasant agriculture.



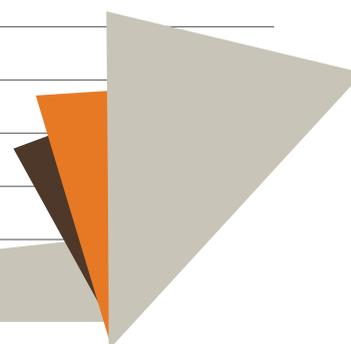
The Santo Stefano di Sessanio lentils are small, tasty, dark and soft-skinned, which means they don't have to be soaked in water before being eaten. They cook quickly and maintain their shape once they're done. Rich in iron and very soft, they're ideal for quick dishes which do not require soaking in

water and culinary preparations typical of the rural Abruzzo culture. This lentil is produced without the use of chemical agents so as to guarantee the highest level of product authenticity. For thirty years now there has been a lentil festival the first Sunday of September in Santo Stefano di Sessanio.



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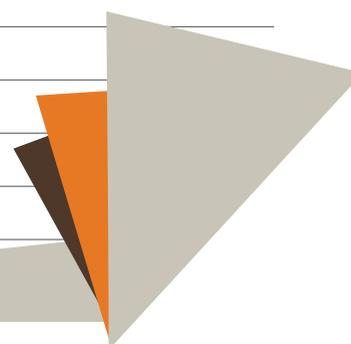






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## Castel del Monte's Canestrato cheese

The transhumance and its traditions. The shepherds' journey from Gran Sasso's Summer pastures to Tavoliere delle Puglie's Winter ones. The flock and its milk. From an ancient tradition passed down to this day comes not only the charm of an olden agricultural practice but also a unique product: Castel del



Monte's Canestrato cheese. Made with raw milk, it is characterised by the simplicity of its manufacture as well as its flavour, strictly linked to the seasons and the grass eaten by the sheep in the pastures. The Summer version of the *Canestrato* cheese has a strong taste which calls back to the Campo Imperatore plateaus, made of hundreds of plant species, mainly grasses and legumes. The cheese made

during Winter, on the other hand, is a perfect blend of aromatic flavours of the Mediterranean. The milk comes mostly from Sopravissane or Gentili di Puglia sheeps. Each farmer follows a different technique in the making of the cheese. Generally, the milk is filtrated, heated to 35-40°C for 15-25 minutes and then supplemented with rennet (obtained from a lamb's stomach). The curd is then broken down to the size of a corn grain, cooked at 40°-45°C for about 15 minutes, put in the traditional *fiscelle* (wicker baskets) and pressed to facilitate the release of the residual whey. After being salted, it is oiled with olive oil so as to not have it dry out. The mature cheese has a hard paste, varies in weight (from half a kilo to two kilos and a half) and has a strong, spicy flavour: it is tasty sliced and grated.





## The Park's turchesa potato

The National Park of Gran Sasso was the one responsible for the rediscovery and reimplementation of this ancient kind of potato - called *turchesa* because of the

colour of its peel - which until recent times remained only a memory. They used a kind of archaeological work in the area of San Pietro Isola di Gran Sasso and San Giorgio Crognaleto to retrieve and plant a few remaining tubers. The cultivation was then expanded to several provinces in L'Aquila, Teramo, Pescara and Rieti in a network of farmer-keepers.

The tuber has a bright purple skin which contains high quantities of antioxidant substances. The inside is white, with a medium graininess which makes it perfect for various kinds of culinary preparations. It is planted in May and harvested at the end of October.

## Spelt

Because of its high productivity levels shown even in hard and marginal areas, the spelt has been cultivated for family consumption in the Park for centuries. Particularly on small plots - especially in mountain areas - where one can find the remains of old stone mills in abandoned farmsteads.

Its culture has been documented from the first decade of the 19th century (Demarco, 1988; Manzi, 2006). It was used in the making of bread and its flour was the basis of the Latin populations' diets.

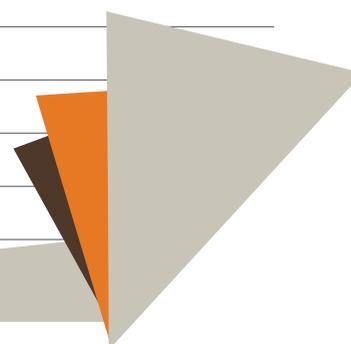
In the market you can find it in different forms: whole spelt, hulled, pearled, broken, made into flour. In the local cuisine it represents a great ingredient for soups or salads. It can be combined with other legumes and vegetables or even simply porcini mushrooms.

There are two kinds of spelt: the one seeded during Autumn and the one during Spring. Their harvest happens between mid-July and mid-August, depending on the altitude.

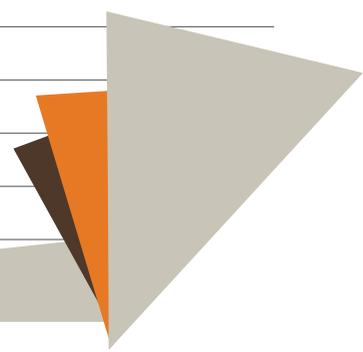


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## Campotosto Mortadella

Historic documents show that this cold meat has been produced in the Campotosto area since 1796. The factor that contributes to characterize the Campotosto *Mortadella* is the climate of the area. The mountain

chains that stretch all around, the nearby lake and the hilly terrain, ideal factors for the maturing phase of the meat, marked by cold northern winds. The manufacturers agreed to preserve the traditional peasant processing in order to protect the mortadella's identity. As a matter of fact, the Campotosto *Mortadella* is more than an alimentary or economic reality, for it represents a tradition and an identifying feature passed through customs and knowledge. It is customary for the people of Campotosto to taste the first production of this mortadella during the traditional Easter Sunday breakfast, when families get together to celebrate the end of the long winter season.

They are sold tied by the pair and have a sub-oval shape, result of the manual processing of the dough which is held on the palm of the hands. This peculiar shape gave the cold meat the nickname "*coglioni di mulo*", or mule's balls. The mortadella is processed during Autumn and can be eaten after a maturing period of 60 to 90 days. Because of its small production, the stock runs out during the first months of the year.

## Vino cotto (Mulled wine)

*Vino cotto* is a typical product of the Abruzzo region, particularly in the areas rich in vineyards. The first written testimony of its existence in Abruzzo dates back to the first years of the 1800's, but it's more likely that this tradition has been passed on from one generation to the other for centuries.

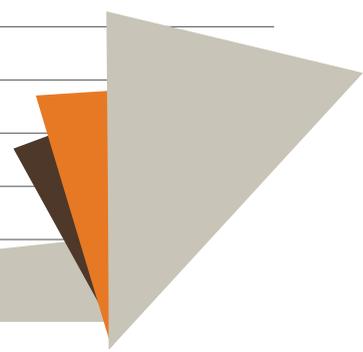
The alcoholic levels of the mulled wine vary depending on the technique used in its production as well as its ageing period. It can be dry or sweet depending on the presence of residual sugars, but retains a fruity aftertaste. Its characteristic features include its colour - which goes from amber red to garnet red - and its strong scent.

It comes from the processing of the must previously obtained by pressing white or red grapes. This, when left to boil, increases in concentration from 40% to 70% and becomes a drink to accompany desserts. The ageing process (done in wooden barrels) is crucial for the making of this wine, which can be left to mature for over 40 years. It can be bought all year long, even though it isn't found easily given its artisanal production.

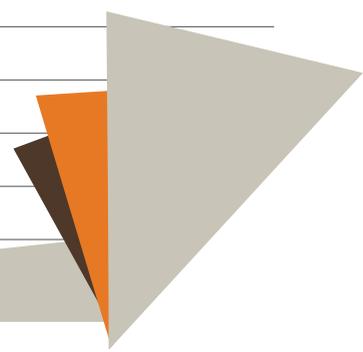


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## Panonta

The *panonta* represents the single but substantial and caloric meal which used to accompany the shepherds on their long days on the mountains. It goes well with a nice glass of wine.

### How to prepare:

Cut the bacon into slices of medium thickness and the sausage into pieces. Put the meat in a pan with oil. Cook over low heat stirring often with a wooden spoon. When the meat is cooked, remove it from the pan and leave it on the side. Fry the bread in the same pan with the leftover fat at high heat. Add salt and distribute the meat and the bread slices in a serving dish.

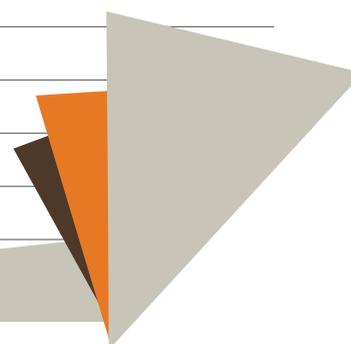
Bacon 200 g  
Sausages 400 g  
6 slices of crusty bread  
2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil  
salt to taste





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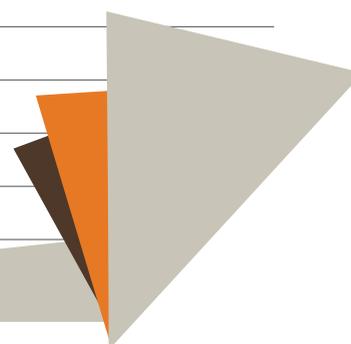






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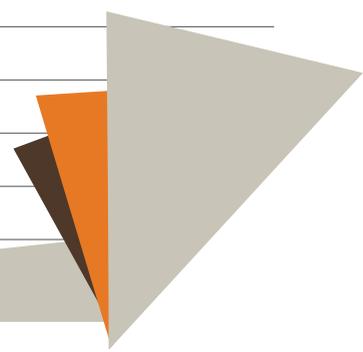






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