



Val Grande National Park



MANGIA PARCO

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.



One of Italy's largest wild areas is only 100 kilometers away from Milan; a corner of wilderness between the Lake Maggiore shores and Val d'Ossola. It was not always this way. The Val Grande National Park carries the marks of an arduous path. The exploitation of the forest was a key activity in the area

up until the early Nineteenth Century, when a complex system of cable cars and a small, daring railroad were made for the transport of wood. On the Ossolan side, they also quarried marble: the stone used in the construction of the Milan Cathedral comes from the Candoglia quarry. Much later, the valley became ground for the First World War trenches: ambushes built between 1916 and 1918 to avoid the danger of an Austro-Hungarian invasion through Switzerland. And finally, in 1944 this was the main stage of the nazifascist roundup, which brought the war to Val Grande.

Since then, human presence in the area has been limited. Nature is slowly regaining its rightful space in this great valley and its relationship with Man is no longer based on the exploitation of resources but rather on the protection and promotion of the area. Lake Maggiore, just beyond the peaks that surround the valley, influences the weather and allows for a wealth of vegetation - with blooms that are one of the biggest attractions of the park - to grow. At low altitude the forests are a mix of chestnuts, higher up they turn into beech forests as well as spruce and fir. Near the peaks are green alder, rhododendrons and blueberries, higher still the alpine meadows reign.

A rich fauna populates the Park. The most widespread mammals are the chamois and the roe, followed by the deer. Up in the air, one can see the golden eagle, the harrier and the peregrine falcon. Other important figures among the birds are the eagle owl, the hazel grouse, the black woodpecker and the black grouse.

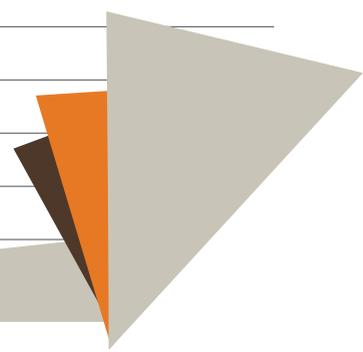
The Val Grande Park, wedged between steep ridges and solitary peaks, is also part of the Sesia Val Grande Geopark, an area of geological interest which has become part of the World Network of Geoparks, sponsored by UNESCO. And, despite its relatively small size, the Park gives the visitor the impression of being in a wild and boundless territory. Furthermore, there is a strong net of traditional activities developed and maintained inside and around the Park. This is due to the high degree of naturalness of the area and the ancient traditions of its human communities. The locals are responsible for the production of cow and goat's cheeses as well as the meat of animals bred on pastures, traditional salami and honey, preserves, syrups, and even a wine produced only in the Ossola valley area.

www.parcovalgrande.it



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VAL GRANDE

★THE PRODUCTS★

Val Grande's goat's cheese (caprino)

From a basic product to a gastronomic refinement, Val Grande's goat cheeses have regained their importance in the area in recent decades. In past eras when the alpine civilization drew food exclusively from its territory, even the roughest patches of land were exploited. Elder mountaineers still remember that the use of these harder and less accessible pastures was given to the "poorer" goats, as opposed to the "noble" cows. The goat's



milk was reserved for family use, to feed the children and the elderly and to produce cheese which was considered less valuable than those made with cow milk. Today, from a low-value product, the goat's cheese has become a main feature of this territory: a few passionate manufacturers produce this cheese which shows in its taste, far from that

of the goat cheeses produced industrially, the uniqueness of the wild Val Grande. This "Caprino" is made only with goat's milk which is processed after the kids have been weaned, and is left to mature for 30-40 days. The shapes may vary, but all the cheeses have the same weight (between half a kilo and one kilo). This cheese goes well with spices or herbs, creating new specialties that blend history and modernity together.

Ossolano cheese

The *Ossolano* cheese, also known as *Spress*, is the progenitor of all the mountain cheeses produced in Ossola and Val Sesia. It is a fat cheese and has as its most distinguishable feature, its long seasoning period, which means it must be produced with low-fat milk. The cheese wheels weigh between 5 and 6 kilos, the crust, of medium consistency, has a colour ranging from light yellow-brown to gray-brown depending on its age. The paste, compact and hard, can be pale yellow or deep yellow and has, in general, small, sparse and irregular holes. The curd is broken twice



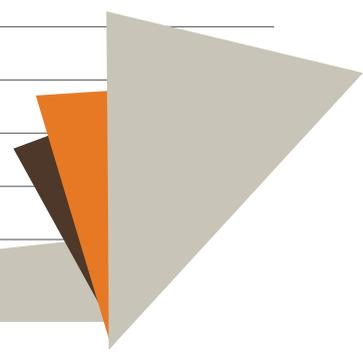
during the production of this cheese: the first break is coarse and happens after coagulation, the second - finer - during the cooking phase. After manual extraction, the dough is placed into molds, pressed and salted vigorously on both sides. The maturation lasts from a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 14 months.

There is also a different variety of this cheese, called *Grasso d'Alpe*, which is considered to be the finest cheese in Ossola. This cheese is larger (diameter of 30 to 40 cm, the weight of 5, 7 kilos), has a rough, dark brown crust and a compact paste which is rather soft, greasy, with small holes and either golden yellow or straw yellow.



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VAL GRANDE

★ THE RECIPES ★

All the traditional recipes in this booklet are collected by the cultural association « Le Donne del Parco ». This group expertly and wisely preserves the antique cooking art of the National Park 's area.

Soup of the mountains

Brucoi (wild spinach) 100g.
potatoes 200 g.
stale bread 60 g.
1 knob of butter
alpine cheese 100 g.
1 cup of milk
water 1 lt.
salt to taste

How to prepare:

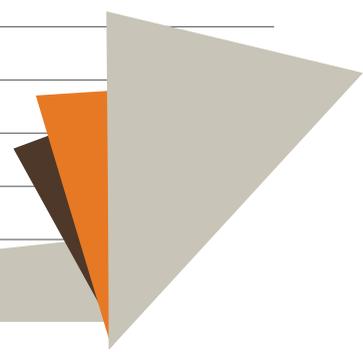
Clean and rinse the *brucoi* and potatoes. Cook the spinach in a pan with 1 lt. water, the stale bread, the potatoes (previously cut into chunks) and the butter. Chop the mountain cheese. The soup is cooked when it has thickened to the point where almost half the water has evaporated. Once the soup done add the pieces of cheese and a glass of milk. Leave it to rest for 15 minutes and serve.

Riso dei spus (Wedding rice)

How to prepare:

Chop the onion and put it in a pan to fry with butter. Brown it and add spoonfuls of water. Add the rice and pour in the Prunent. Once the wine has evaporated, cover the rice with the broth and let it cook stirring from time to time. Meanwhile, prepare the meat sauce with a base of fried onions, carrots, celery and mixed minced pork or beef. When the rice is cooked, season it with the sauce.

600 g rice.
beef broth 1 lt.
1 onion
butter 100 g.
1 glass of wine Prunent
meat sauce to taste





Ossola's Mortadella

If when you think of a *mortadella* what comes to mind is a classic pink cooked sausage cut in large slices (the so-called “Bologna”, in other words) then you are wrong. Val d'Ossola's *mortadella* is something else entirely. This delicious sausage, traditional of the Ossola valley, is actually a salami. The misconception



probably comes from ancient times, when butchers used a mortar (from which comes the name *mortadella*) to cut the pork. Today this delicious salami is still produced in small quantities by a handful of artisans, with raw pork meat to which is added a small percentage of liver (5% at most, though the Val Vigezzo area also offers a variant with a

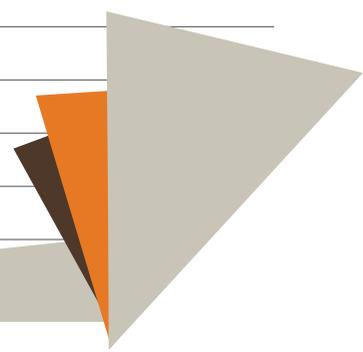
double amount of liver, more appreciated by local consumers) and in some cases warm wine flavoured with spices, sort of like a mulled wine. All this is packed into pork entrails, after which the meat is left to mature for about two months. Val d'Ossola's *mortadella* can be twisted like a doughnut or straight. It was once called “madonna” and is now known in dialect as *mortadelun*. It should be eaten sliced with black bread produced in the area or, when it's still fresh, boiled and eaten with potatoes or polenta.





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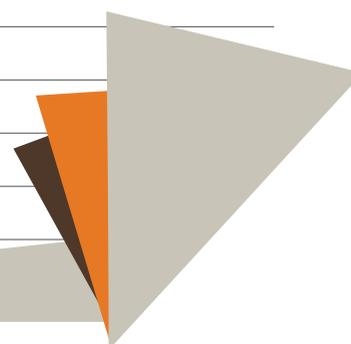
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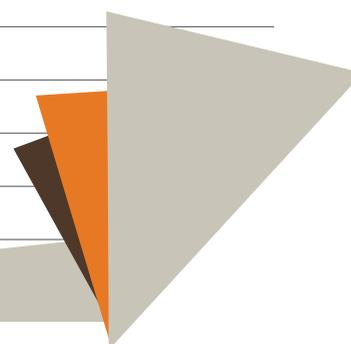
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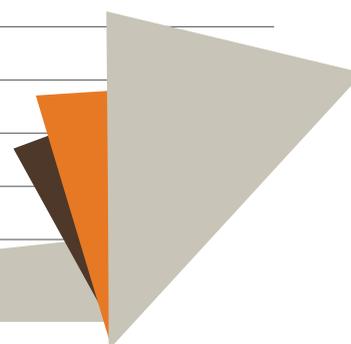
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VAL GRANDE

★ THE RECIPES ★

Rustic Pie

*Ingredients for the preparation
of the shortcrust pastry:*

flour type 00 200 g.
butter 100 g.
70 ml water.
salt

*Ingredients for the preparation
of the rustic:*

shortcrust pastry
Ossola cheese 300 g.
bacon 200 g.
onion 100 g.
olive oil 100 ml.
butter 50 g.
8 eggs
salt 30 g.
nutmeg to taste
Parmesan 100 g.
pumpkin puree 300 g.
boiled chestnuts 200 g.

How to prepare:

For the shortcrust pastry - arrange the flour on a heap, make a hole in the middle and break the eggs. Add the diced butter straight from the fridge and a pinch of salt. Start working the flour with the butter with a fork squashing the diced butter and then proceed quickly with your hands (the heat of the hands may affect the preparation. You can also prepare the dough with a blender). The dough should be “sandy” after processing. Make a ball, put it in a glass bowl and let it rest in the fridge for at least 1 hour.

For the filling - braise in olive oil and butter the onions into strips. Cut the bacon into thin slices brown it along with the onions. Dice the *Ossola* cheese, boil the chestnuts and chop them finely. Ease the pumpkin puree with milk, eggs, nutmeg and Parmesan cheese.

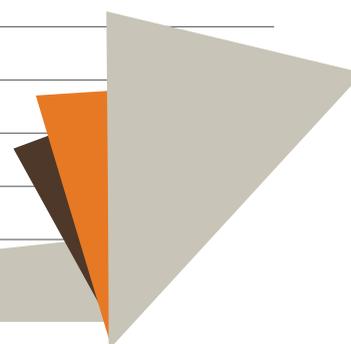
For the rustic - roll out the shortcrust pastry into a sheet of about 4.3 mm and place it in a greased and floured baking sheet, piercing it with a fork.

Create a layer of onions and bacon, cover it with cheese cubes, chopped chestnuts and pumpkin puree mixed with milk, eggs, Parmesan cheese and nutmeg. Bake at 280 ° C and serve the pie warm.



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VAL GRANDE

★ THE PRODUCTS ★

Valle Vigezzo's kid

The mountain community of Val Vigezzo is characterised, according to tradition, by the breeding of goats, a feature which has always played an important part in the economy of the Alpine territory. It is a production made up of specimens of different goat breeds, with a predominance of the *camosciata* breed, raised exclusively in Val Vigezzo in accordance with specifications issued by the homonymous mountain community. Since the animals are very young and are fed a milk diet, the meat is light pink, tender and with a very low fat content. The farms are generally small, mostly extensive, and use of the Alpine pastures for at least 8-9 months a year. In accordance with specifications, the kid must be born and slaughtered at Val Vigezzo and must be fed goat's milk only. Its selling weight may vary between 9 and 13 kg. Only by following these rules can the producer get the official "typical Val Vigezzo kid" label. The products include both the meat, from which we get the goat's violin, and the milk, from which we get fresh cheeses flavoured with herbs.

Prunent wine

The legendary Prunent is a typical local wine, whose presence in Ossola dates back to the 14th Century, according to historic documents. It has very typical



features linked to its territory and its grapevine. The Prunent has a bright colour garnet with strong orange hues. Its intense, broad and enveloping scent is followed by a powerful, full, tannic and harmonious flavour and a spicy aftertaste. It goes well with second courses of meat and game, as well as as flavourful cheeses.

The presence of the Prunent is documented in Ossola, as mentioned before, since 1307: the Galletti Museum of Domodossola retains the will of a notable of Trontano, who bequeathed a small number of bottles of Prunent to the monks of the area.

Honey of Val Grande

Beekeeping has been documented in Val Grande for centuries as testified by the many "bee houses" that are present in many pastures, small groups of mountain huts, and villages. There are documents



dating back to the Thirteenth Century which testify to the area's significant beeswax production, which was exported even to distant places. The *Millefiori di Montagna* honey comes from hives that are transport-

ed, in summer, over the 1000 meters high, and placed in an area with a wide variety of woody plants, herbs and shrubs. The bees collect the nectar in the meadows and pastures in bloom, which results in a flavourful and aromatic honey which is never exactly the same.



Aurano's polenta and cod

How to prepare:

Heat some water in a high pot to cook the polenta. Bring to a boil, add 2-3 tablespoons of olive oil and a pinch of salt and scatter the corn flour for the polenta, stirring constantly. Boil for a few minutes and stir well to cook the flour for about an hour (you know the polenta is cooked when the crust starts forming around the pot and the mixture is even).

Soak the cod in warm water the previous night by cutting it into large cubes, washing it and allowing it to soak for about 10/8 hours, changing the water 4/5 times. Prepare the cod by leaving it under cold water for 15/20 minutes, drying, flouring it and frying it. Separately, peel the onions, slice them and stew them in oil. Add the fried cod and cook over low heat for 15 minutes. Heat the oven and put the cod covered by tomato sauce and sprinkled with chopped parsley at 180 ° C for about 10 minutes. Once the polenta is done serve it with the cod.

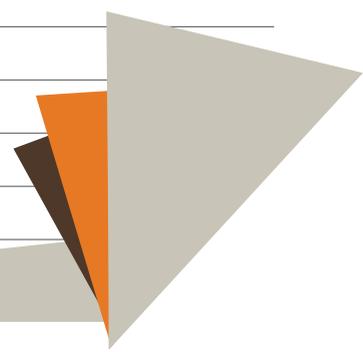
- Polenta flour 1.5 kg.
- water as needed
- salt to taste
- 3 fillets of salted cod
- onion 650 g.
- oil to taste
- parsley to taste
- tomato sauce
- white flour for breading





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