

When in Rome ..



How can you enjoy or appreciate a complex city like Rome by solely touring around museums and monuments? Food is always an essential part of a society and without a good idea of the way a nation eats you can't possibly get an insight into its character. Thus an initiative was formed to bring back to our times the dishes of the ancient Roman civilisation. This initiative is a result of the cooperation between the German travel agency albaTours und Nestore, the proprietor of this restaurant. albaTours specializes in school and cultural travel and offers its clients programmes off the beaten tracks of tourism.

Thus the two main authorities on Roman cooking were thoroughly studied, the famous cook Apicius and Cato the Censor. Both had a somewhat different approach. Apicius was an extravagant hedonist and disciple of Epicure, given to all sorts of luxury. Cato had to face quite a different problem. He had to fight against the ever growing wave of Greek fashions in literature, food and philosophy.

A main problem when preparing a course of meals was the fact that quite a few herbs and spices have been lost in the course of 2000 years. So alternatives had to be found and it took months of experimenting with the recipes. We would only be too glad to hear your opinion on the result and we wish you - which that old roman saying VOBIS SIT BENE- or "it may do you a lot of good".



Apicius the man und his work

25 B.C. - date of death unknown. So, who was this Marcus Gavius Apicius? He served under Augustus and Tiberius as a culinary expert and he provided us with information on ancient Roman cuisine.

This Apicius was considered to be a strange character who enjoyed "high society" and "living well". Known for his sauces and extravagant dishes, he served oddities such as flamingo and nightingale tongues, camel heels, roasted ostrich and stuffed sterile sow's womb. These dishes were meant to startle the Roman ruling class. As Apicius' finances fell into disarray he feared he could no longer maintain his extravagant and expensive lifestyle and chose to take his own life by poisoning himself.

There are many interesting stories about Apicius. He was ridiculously absurd in his search of the ultimate culinary experience. Pliny credits Apicius with the idea of force feeding figs to pigs or geese to enlarge their livers (stuffed figs = lat ficatum) . These are the origins of the French word foie and the Italian word fegato.

It is assumed that this Apicius was responsible for two cookbooks. Apicius' first book, De condituris, was completely on sauces. This was later absorbed into De re coquinaria, one of the oldest cookbooks found, which was a single volume of various recipes integrated together. This 2nd cookbook was compiled around the 4th century.



Some recipes are taken from Cato the Censor's book on agriculture. He was faced with the problem that Greek dishes became more and more popular among the Romans whose main dish up to then had consisted of a bowl of porridge. Cato had to tell Roman housewives that there are indeed alternatives to the food of the detested Greeks who had - according to him - set out to ruin the traditional Roman way of life..

GVSTATIONES (Appetizers)

Libum Catonis

Libum hoc modo facito. Casei P. II bene disterat in mortario. Ubi bene distriverit, farinae siligineae libram aut, si voles tenerius esse, selibram similaginis eo-



dem indito permiscetoque cum caseo bene. Ovum unum addito et una permisceto bene. Inde panem facito, folia subdito, in foco caldo sub testu coquito leniter. (CATONE, De agricultura, LXXV)

Put two pounds of cheese into a mixing bowl. Mash well until it becomes a smooth, lumpless paste. Add one pound of flour and mix well with the fingers. Add the beaten egg and mix well. If you don't want the dough to be sticky, add only half a pound of flour. Divide the dough and form round, flat loaves. Lay each on bay leaves and bake in a preheated oven until cooked through.

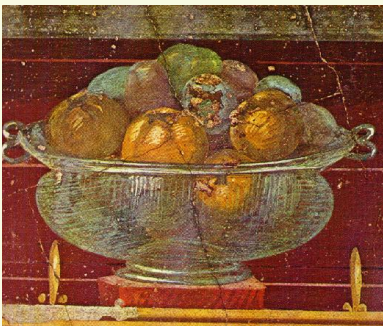
Sala Cattabia

Piper, mentam, apium, puleium aridum, caseum, nucleos pineos, mel, acetum, liquamen, ovorum vitella, aquam recentem, panem ex posca maceratum exprimes, caseum bubulum, cucumeres in caccabulo compones, interpositis nucleis. Mittes concisi capparis minuti cum iocusculis gallinarum. Jus profundes, super frigidam collocabis et sic appones.

(Apicius, IV, 1, 1)

Line a shallow bowl with the slices of bread and sprinkle the bread with the vinegar-water so that it is well soaked. Add the remaining salad ingredients decoratively in layers. Blend the dressing ingredients together and pour over the salad.

Scriblita



Scriblitam sic facito. In balteo tractis caseo ad eundem modum facito, uti placentam, sine melle. (Cato, de agri cultura, 68)

Make scriblita as follows. For the belt, the tracta and the cheese, proceed in the same way as placenta, but without honey.

Ova Elix

Ova elixa: liquamine, oleo, mero vel ex liquamine, pipere, lasere. In ovis apalis: piper, ligusticum, nucleos infusos. Suffundes mel, acetum, liquamine temperabis.

(Apicius, VII. 19. 2)

Mix together pepper, lovage (levisticum), soaked pine kernels. Add honey and vinegar and season with Liquamen. Serve together with the eggs

Rustici Plinii

MENSA PRIMA

Perna et Betae Minutae

I). *Pernam, ubi eam cum Caricis plurimis elixeris et tribus lauri foliis, detracta cute tessellam incidis et melle complebis. Deinde farinam oleo subactam conteres et ei corium reddis, ut, cum farina cocta fuerit, eximas furno ut est, et inferes.*

II). *Pernae cocturam: ex aqua cum Caricis cocta simpliciter, ut solet, inlata cum buccellis, caroeno vel condito. Melius, si cum musteis.*

Boil the ham in water together with fig from the province of Caria leaves of the laurel tree. Cut off the grease and cut square holes into the meat and fill them with honey. Prepare a dough with flour and olive oil and cover the ham with it. Put it into the oven and serve it like this.

SECUNDAE MENSAE (main dish)

Savillum

Savillum hoc modo facito: Farinae selibram, casei P. II S una commisceto quasi libum, addito mellis P. et ovum unum. Catinum fictile oleo unguito. Ubi omnia bene comiscueris, in catinum indito, catinum testo operito. Videto ut bene percocas medio, ubi altissimum est. Ubi, coctum erit, catinum eximito, melle unguito, papaver infriato, sub testum subde paulisper, postea eximito. Ita pone cum catillo et lingua. (Cato, de agri cultura, 84)

Mix cheese, flour, honey and yolks, whipping as much air in the mixture as possible.

Beat the egg whites into soft peaks and fold into cheese mixture.

Pour into a greased earthenware serving dish. Bake for at least half an hour, testing with a straw until done. Turn off oven, remove cake and pour warm honey over and sprinkle with seeds or nuts; return to the cooling oven for 5 to 10 minutes.

Panis Quadratus et Mulsum

