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TRAVEL HISTORY CULTURE PEOPLE FOOD WINE

ABRUZZISSIMO MAGAZINE



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*Dried figs from Atesa, Christmas
soup, il parozzo cake, desserts
with nuts, sweet wines*

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ABRUZZISSIMO MAGAZINE

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How time flies! It is December already and the year is drawing to an end. I am sure most of us are going to be relieved to wave goodbye to 2020. This is going to be the strangest, quietest Christmas, so the least we all deserve is a big Abruzzese-style feast. We prepared a special recipe bonanza with delicious ideas for traditional festive dishes (page 30). And our Made in Abruzzo Shopping Guide will help you to find the best gifts by local artisans (page 3).

There is no Christmas in Abruzzo without nativity scenes, enjoyed by both children and adults alike, religious people and non-believers. We talk about this joyous custom on page 10.

Our photo essay on page 14 takes you to the village of Fara Filiorum Petri to see the beautiful festival with pagan roots: *le farchie*. We invite you to stroll among the ruins of the once mighty Roman city of Peltuinum (page 7) and explore the best mountain trails on snowshoes (page 26).

Do you enjoy reading ABRUZZISSIMO? You can contribute to its upkeep by [making a donation here](#). We are a small team of volunteers who are passionate about Abruzzo and we need your help to make the magazine grow.

We'll be taking a break in January, so the next issue of ABRUZZISSIMO will arrive in your inbox on February 3.

Sending you all warm holiday greetings. *Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo a tutti!*

A presto,

Anna Lebedeva

Editor

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Made in Abruzzo

HOLIDAY GIFTS GUIDE

At ABRUZZISSIMO, we like all thing Abruzzo. This Christmas, more than ever, small businesses and artisans from the region need support, so we picked our favourite “Made in Abruzzo” gift ideas to inspire and help you with your holiday shopping.



TRADITIONAL BLANKETS

Coperte Merlino have been making amazing high-quality Abruzzese double-sided woollen blankets in Taranta Peligna since 1870. They still use old traditional patterns, including the famous cherubs, and knot the fringe on each blanket by hand. The factory has an [online shop](#) and ships worldwide.

CONTEMPORARY TABLEWARE



Abruzzo Creativo designs contemporary tableware decorated with patterns such as the presentosa jewel, the magnificent bridge in the port of Pescara, and the warrior of Capestrano. We love the plates with a trabocco fishing machine and the howling wolves mugs.

FINE JEWELLERY FROM SCANNO

The Di Rienzo family in Scanno has been making fine jewel-ery since 1850: presentose and the famous amorino pendants (the actress Helen Mirren wore one recently!), amazing pieces with hand-made Scanno lace, etc. They have an [online shop](#) and ship internationally.



WAFFLE MAKERS

Massimo at Aveia Ars makes amazing waffle irons and cookie stamps with traditional Abruzzese patterns (e.g., *presentosa*, *rosone* etc.) in the earthquake-devastated village of Fossa. To order, contact him via [Facebook](#) or at aveiaars@gmail.com.



COLOURFUL CERAMICS

Domenico Guardiani makes quality colourful ceramics in the centre of Pescara. In his [online shop](#) you can buy vases, plates, mugs, classic and modern, all painted by hand.



ARTISANAL PANETTONE

The Merlini family makes artisanal *panettone*: with local olive oil and candied olives, organic farro flour, truffles, and vino cotto. Browse their selection in the [online shop](#). Delivery throughout Europe (contact them via email to place your order and inquire about the shipping costs).



SWEET HAMPERS FROM L'AQUILA

The Calvisi family of [Dolce Aveja](#) has been making delicious traditional confectionery in L'Aquila for 40 years. Their Christmas gift boxes are filled with biscuits, candied almonds, nougat, chocolates, jams, liqueurs – all made in their small pastry shop. International shipping available.



HONEY GOODIES FROM TORNARECCIO

Great stocking fillers from the award-winning bee keeping company in Tornareccio – Apicoltura Luca Finocchio: sweets, cosmetics, liqueurs all made with local honey. They have an [online shop](#) and ship in Europe.

MADE IN ABRUZZO

COSMETICS WITH NAVELLI SAFFRON

Tindora high-end cosmetics are made in L'Aquila with organic saffron from the Navelli Plains. The company makes regular donations to support young saffron farmers in the area. Worldwide shipping.



OLIVE OIL IN CASTELLI CERAMICS

Extra virgin olive oil from a family farm in Penne is great, but when it's sold in beautiful hand-painted ceramic bottles from Castelli, it makes for a very special gift. In this online shop, you will find other delicacies from local producers. We love their hand-painted ceramic boxes with saffron.



NOUGAT AND CONFETTI FROM SULMONA

The William Di Carlo factory has been making confetti using a secret family recipe since the 19th century. They are also famous for their delicious traditional nougat. For Christmas, they make beautiful gift boxes filled with sweet goodies. We love their old-fashioned tins with four types of nougat. So luscious and decadent. They ship worldwide.



TRUFFLES FROM ABRUZZO

TRUFFLE PRODUCTS,
FRESH WHITE AND BLACK TRUFFLES

100% NATURAL

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VISIT OUR ONLINE SHOP: WWW.BERLINGERITARTUFI.COM





ABRUZZO IN PHOTOS

Our competition "Abruzzo in photos" is closed. We have received many wonderful pictures from our readers and will be announcing the winner in the next issue in February. Until then, we will continue sharing the best photos on our [Facebook page](#). The photo that receives the highest number of likes will win and its author will get the beautiful latest edition of Abruzzo History and Art Guide (in English) by [Carsa Edizioni](#).



Pacentro. By Trish Ellse



Scanno. By Lise Presseault



Town of Bomba. By Steve Barber



Santo Stefano di Sessanio. By Sunny Shari

THE VANISHED METROPOLIS OF PELTUINUM

By Camillo Chiarieri

The ancient town of Peltuinum sprawled on the Navelli Plains, between the Sirente and Gran Sasso mountain ranges. Only a few majestic ruins remain from what once was the grand capital of wool commerce.



Fragments of Peltuinum's city walls. Photo by Linda Dini Jenkins

The origins of Peltuinum go back to the Italic period, when the city was the main settlement of the Vestini tribe. With the arrival of ancient Romans, it became one of the biggest cities of the Empire in the area. As it was located on the main transhumance route Peltuinum, together with another big city nearby, Amiternum, was an important commercial and trade centre for managing the seasonal movement of flocks.

METROPOLIS

According to archaeologists, at the peak of its splendour, in II century CE, Peltuinum might have had as many as 70,000 inhabitants. If it

still existed today, it would be one of the biggest cities in Abruzzo.

Some archaeological studies have revealed that, at a certain point, perhaps in the 5th century, Peltuinum was almost completely destroyed by a very powerful earthquake. After the earthquake, the city was painstakingly rebuilt, but the Roman Empire had now fallen into a serious economic crisis heading for collapse, so Peltuinum never returned to its former glory.

The archaeological site is practically unknown to the people of Abruzzo. Not too long ago, the British Academy of Archaeology conducted studies there with ground-penetrating radar to

see what was still hidden under the cultivated fields that today occupy most of what was once the urban area. The scientists discovered many things still to be excavated, including the intact amphitheatre. The radar showed well-preserved streets, the impressive size of the city walls' perimeter, the city grid, and the bases of the buildings under the ground.

Like in all other ancient Roman cities, the theatre as well as the amphitheatre were built on the outskirts, attached to the city walls. That way, at the end of a show, residents could quickly return home, while those who lived in the countryside could easily leave without making too much noise or creating a disturbance. Just like today, football stadiums are often built near the city limits to keep the disorderly fans at a safe distance. The Peltuinum theatre ruins have an interesting feature: archaeologists noticed that in the Middle Ages the westernmost part of the *cavea* (the parts where the spectators sat) had been separated from the rest of the structure, to be used as a base for the construction of a watchtower. This shows how, during the great decline following the

collapse of the Roman Empire, there was no longer any desire to go to the theatre, but only a great need for security and control of the territory. The tower erected on the Peltuinum theatre used to be in the visual field of the important fortress of Rocca Calascio for sending signals.

FALL OF THE EMPIRE

Why did such a big city like Peltuinum disappear? What happened to its inhabitants? With the collapse of the Roman Empire and the breakdown of public administration, cities as large as Peltuinum became unsafe: subject to attacks by barbarian troops looting vulnerable urban centres, susceptible to epidemics, and scarred by food shortages because the fields had been largely abandoned.

Gradually, groups of city dwellers retreated for shelter to impervious valleys or to the most inaccessible hills, sometimes in the same places where, up to about 600 years earlier, their ancestors' Italic settlements stood. In the space of a century, all the big Roman cities were abandoned and numerous small villages (called *castella* in Latin), sometimes inhabited

Steps in the theatre. Photo via Peltuinum/Facebook



by just a handful of families, were born. Almost a thousand years later, they would once again come together to give life to the city of L'Aquila.

Over the following centuries, architectural decorations, columns, and large limestone blocks from the buildings of Peltuinum were re-used to build churches and medieval castles in the valley. The church of San Paolo a Peltuinum in Prata d'Ansidonia was constructed in the 7-8th century with the materials taken from Peltuinum. Stone blocks were cut among the ruins of the Roman city and transferred to the towns nearby to build houses.

Today, in Petuinum it is still possible to see the remains of the theatre, fragments of the monumental city walls and the sacred area where the main temple stood but, unfortunately, it is not a well-preserved archaeological site. The area has been neglected despite its importance and outstanding artifacts, including a particular altar from the Neolithic period. A large rock with a carved "H" is somewhat of a mystery. Some academics say it was an ancient wine press, but many believe it was an altar used by the Vestini tribe for animal sacrifices.

The church of San Paolo a Peltuinum. Photo via Peltuinum/Facebook



The mysterious altar. Photo via Peltuinum/Facebook

If the site continues to be neglected as it is now, in a few years nature will swallow the ruins and nothing will remain visible.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Peltuinum is located 30 km east of L'Aquila, between Prata d'Ansidonia and Castelnuovo and is reachable by car. Enter "Peltuinum" in Google Maps to navigate there. The site sprawls over a large area and is free to access. Unfortunately, there is no marked route and just a few boards with explanations. An organised private tour can take up to two hours.

In summer, the Università di Roma Sapienza runs digs in the area and the archaeologists take visitors for free guided tours (many of them speak English). You can find information about the upcoming digs as well as photos of the recent finds on their [Facebook page](#).

Camillo Chiarieri is a registered tour guide and author of several books on the history of Abruzzo ([available here](#)). For private tours in Italian contact Camillo via his [Facebook page](#).

ABRUZZO'S JOYOUS PRESEPI

By Michelle Reid
and Anna Lebedeva

Every year, Abruzzo celebrates Christmas with nativity scenes. Miniature and made by local artisans, or live scenes played by children and adults, they are joyous events with a strong community spirit.



A living nativity scene in Rivisondoli.
Photo via Presepeviventervivisondoli.it

LONG HISTORY

Just as the Christmas tree is such a symbol of the festive season in many countries, the *presepe*, or nativity scene, is as much, if not more, the Italian equivalent. At Christmastime, model nativity scenes of all shapes and sizes – from the elegantly simple to the incredibly elaborate – adorn corners of houses and piazzas across the country. Just as all the Christmas story figures that are handed down, *presepe* are also handed down and added to through generations of Italian families.

The tradition of nativity scenes arrived in Abruzzo in 1225 in the church of San Domenico in Penne. Over centuries, *presepi* entered private houses of local aristocratic families. An inventory from the Castel of Celano drawn up in 1567 mentions one from the noble Piccolomini household. Not too long ago, a beautiful 17th century *presepe* was discovered in a crate that used to belong to the rich Antinori family in Lanciano. Nativities from Abruzzo have always been known for depicting humble scenes of daily life,

shepherds with their flocks and picturesque mountains.

But nativity scenes are not limited to these intricate miniature creations. One of the most wonderful popular Christmas traditions in Abruzzo – with a long history – is that of the *presepe vivente*, the living nativity. It has become an important annual event in many areas of Italy and, although we may well be biased, we don't think anywhere does it quite like the beautifully evocative mountain villages in this region.

LIVING NATIVITY

The *presepe vivente* is celebrated in numerous Abruzzo towns and villages from Christmas Day through January 6th. It is a theatrical spectacle that combines local traditions with the magical atmosphere of Christmas and involves whole communities. People from the respective towns and villages participate as inhabitants of Bethlehem, as well as the obvious characters of Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and the wise men; in some towns more than 100 people make

A living nativity scene in Rivisondoli. Photo via Presepeviverivisondoli.it

up the cast of the show. A young baby from the village is also given the honour of playing the role of the baby Jesus, making it a community affair that spans all ages. Locations throughout each of the towns that produce a living nativity are chosen to recreate scenes from the Christmas story. Many places have a walking itinerary which, accompanied by the availability of local dishes cooking and traditional craftspeople working, invoke the aromas and sounds of a long-forgotten past throughout the small streets, really bringing the Christmas story to life.

Almost every village and town in Abruzzo has a manger scene at Christmas, and there are more than 20 locations where *presepi viventi* are staged.

If you haven't yet had the opportunity to visit one of Abruzzo's nativities, put it on your To-do list. You may not get the opportunity this year, but before long we will be back stronger than ever and this tradition that has lasted almost 800 years is not going to go away any time soon!



PACENTRO

The living nativity has become one of the most important events in the village's annual calendar and is considered a folklore tradition in its own right. Pacentro provides the stage for a show embraced by the wider Peligna Valley communities and has grown into an occasion that brings in tourists from all over. Pacentro's recreation of the nativity scene also incorporates elements of the local farming tradition. Bringing life back into the heart of the historic centre, there are a series of performances that sit side-by-side with the living nativity.

The food stands offer local cakes, pizzas, gnocchi, chestnuts and more, flooding the streets with delicious aromas as visitors walk the itinerary that leads eventually to the cave and the culminating Christmas scene of Jesus in the manger. Cantinas and ateliers offer places to stop along the route and browse local crafts. For updates, see the organisers' [Facebook page](#).

RIVISONDOLI

Since 1951, the town of Rivisondoli organises a live nativity scene on the evening of January 5. The local tradition of *presepe vivente* was started 70 years ago by a local priest who wanted to lift the spirits of the town ravaged by World War II. The nativity scene was set up inside a ruin of a bombed building and the part of the angel was played by a local girl who miraculously survived the Nazis' massacre of the civilians in Rivisondoli.

Every year, about 100 people are involved in bringing Biblical scenes to life and the roles are assigned months before the event. Baby Jesus is always represented by the town's last newborn. Last year, a famous Italian theatre director was invited to revise the



A living nativity scene in Rivisondoli. Photo via [Presepeviverivisondoli.it](#)

scenography of the manger scene to make sure it was more magical than ever. Rivisondoli gets snow often, which makes the event truly special. It attracts big crowds and the atmosphere is very festive. For more details, see the town's tourism [Facebook page](#).

CIVITELLA ALFEDENA

Civitella Alfedena looks like a fairy tale town in winter. Add Christmas lights, some snow and a nativity scene, and it becomes pure magic. For one month, starting the first week of December, life-size papier-mâché figures of bakers, blacksmiths, butchers, and cobblers going on about their business are set up in courtyards, wine cellars, narrow alleyways and small squares in the historic centre of the town. Around any corner you might bump into a shepherd carrying a basket of hay, a donkey, or an old lady spinning wool. At the end of the itinerary, at the top of the town, you will find

the manger with Baby Jesus cosily nestled in a natural grotto. The scenes are lit up from 5pm to 11pm. The dates are announced on the local tourism [office page](#). Watch [this video](#) to get an idea of what to expect.

LANCIANO

Handmade nativity scenes are a serious business in Lanciano. The [local branch](#) of the Italian Association of Friends of the Manger Scene (*Associazione Italiana Amici del Presepio*) runs courses and sells supplies for local enthusiasts. Every December they organise a competition for the best manger scene in the city and have a permanent exhibition of *presepi*, a paradise for those who think Christmas should last all year. You can buy or order figurines for a special “Made in Abruzzo” gift to take home.

Address: Via Garibaldi, vico 44, N°2, Lanciano

ATESSA

If you're missing Christmas festivities this year, here's a great option: the artisanal nativities exhibition in Atessa, which is open all year around. The 400-square-metre museum-like space is filled with dozens of miniature *presepi* made by local masters and divided in three themes: Atessa in

Presepi in Atessa (left) and Civitella Alfedena (right)



miniature, the life of Jesus and scenic nativities. The city scenes meticulously reproduce the old streets of Atessa, with historic and traditional costumes which were studied from archive photos and documents. It feels almost like an ethnographic museum that gives a glimpse of the city's past. You can also see 23 scenes from the life of Jesus with architecturally and historically accurate details. You do not need to be a practicing Christian to appreciate the artistry of the displays. Watch [this video](#) that takes you on a virtual tour of the permanent exhibition. Book your visit via their [website](#).

Address: Piazza Oberdan, Atessa

VILLALAGO

Without a doubt, Villalago has the most extreme *presepe*. To see it you have to don a scuba diving suit and go underwater! Every year, a group of divers place six ceramic figurines (the Three Wise Men, Joseph, Mary and Baby Jesus) from Castelli on the bottom of Lake San Domenico. Even if you are not into diving, the event itself is beautiful: a campfire is lit on the lakeshore, candles flicker under the arches of the picturesque hermitage overlooking Lago di San Domenico and you can see the divers' lights moving under the dark water. The event normally takes place in December, after Christmas, but there is no set date, so you need to call the town hall to inquire (tel. 0864 740134).

THE FIERY FEAST OF SANT'ANTONIO ABATE

By Franco Di Peco

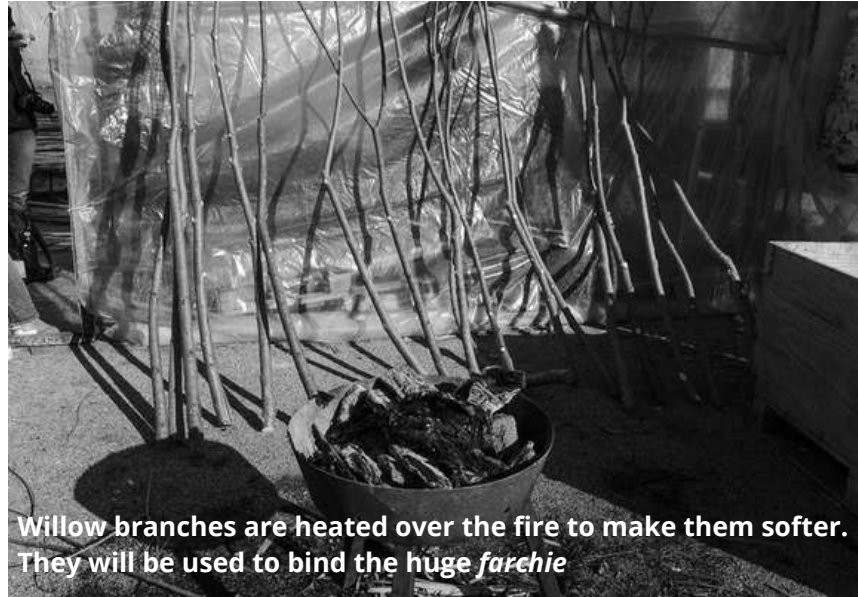
In Fara Filiorum Petri — a small town in the province of Chieti — the feast of Sant'Antonio Abate is celebrated with burning *farchie*, tall bundles of reeds tied together with willow branches.

According to local legend, Saint Anthony protected the town from a French troop invasion in 1799 by setting fire to the oaks that surrounded the town, forcing the army to retreat. Fifteen neighbourhoods in Fara Filiorum Petri start preparations months before the festival, collecting reeds, drying and storing them. A few days before the celebration, teams in each district start building 10-metre-high *farchie* following long-standing traditions of the assemblage. The work is supervised by older members of the community who have been making *farchie* for decades. Each has its own style, but apart from the beauty of the knots and perfectly aligned reeds, the bundles are

made to burn evenly, from the bottom to the top, with firecrackers attached to them. At sunset, on January 16, the *farchie* are lit up and the town sings, drinks, and feasts on traditional sweet treats. Some families take the ash from the *farchie* to sprinkle in the fields or barns as a blessing. In this photo essay Franco Di Peco captures the celebratory atmosphere of the *farchie* festival which he attended last January.

Franco Di Peco is a retired software developer and a professional photographer passionate about documenting Abruzzo's traditional festivals.





A billhook and worked rods that will become the bones and the body of a *farchia*

Willow branches are heated over the fire to make them softer. They will be used to bind the huge *farchie*



Tying the willow branches

The tied-up branches ready to be used



The final touches. The *farchia* is almost ready



In the evenings leading up to the festival, the *farchie* construction team goes from house to house to sing and eat



Hosts in each house offer food and wine in honour of Sant'Antonio Abate. The tradition is called *Portare lu Sant'Antoni*



The *farchia* is taken out of the marquee and ready to be transported to the town's square



Waiting to carry the *farchia* to the square; the team rests after hard work



Heading to the meeting place of the town's districts. Along the way, other people from the district join the procession



The party is starting on the tractor while transporting the *farchia*



The *farchie* are lit up and the celebrations continue all night

A DAY IN SAN BENEDETTO IN PERILLIS

By Anna Lebedeva

For such a small village, San Benedetto in Perillis packs a punch with its unique treasures that few people know about: an underground system of caves and wooden locks which origins are lost in the mists of time.



San Benedetto in Perillis. Photo via Comune di San Benedetto in Perillis

The road to San Benedetto in Perillis has seen better days. The village of about 60 inhabitants has been deeply scarred by depopulation, the earthquake of 2009 and somewhat forgotten. A thoughtless bureaucratic decision excluded it from the so-called crater, a list of towns and villages most affected by the devastating tremor, which means rebuilding it has not been a priority for the region. Reconstruction works are slowly bringing wounded buildings back to life, but there is still a long way to go. The recently elected all-female local administration is determined to turn things around, revive the village and re-start the cultural events that once filled the streets with a lively buzz.

The splendid Benedictine abbey, from which the village began in the 8th century, is still clad in scaffolding and fenced off with an unsightly orange plastic net. But don't let all this put you off paying a visit to San Benedetto in Perillis.

Stroll along the cobbled streets, peek through a church window, greet numerous village cats and linger over a drink in the only bar on the central piazza, listening to the jolly barman's banter. Walk to the top of the village, to the overgrown panoramic point to take in the vistas of the mountain chains stretching into the horizon and glance a blue ribbon of the sea. On your slow walk you will find some treasures that are unique to this corner of Abruzzo.

WHAT TO SEE

GROTTOS

Many buildings in the village's old centre have grottos underneath – 70 in total – some of them interconnected. They were created over centuries by excavating gravel for sale.

The temperature in the grottos is constant, around +20C throughout the year, so they were used not only for storing food supplies, but also as social clubs. In colder months, from October to April, instead of burning expensive wood that many villagers couldn't afford, locals moved to their grottos under the houses. Imagine: young people brought dates and had dances here, supervised by the elderly; kids played; women brought down their looms for weaving fabric; men made baskets and ploughs. Donkeys, pigs and cows were here, too. Each grotto was known by the surname of the owner. The Grotto Zupone was also called "the Parliament" because men gathered there to discuss communal problems and make important decisions.

One of the restored grottos



Up until 50 years ago, the grottos were used on a regular basis. A few of them have been restored in recent years and used for hosting cultural events and concerts. The majority of houses with grottos didn't sustain any significant damage during the earthquake of 2009. Locals believe it was because the empty spaces beneath helped to reduce the impact of the tremor.

WOODEN LOCKS

On many old houses in San Benedetto in Perillis you can spot wooden locks, identical to the ones used in ancient Egypt in the 3rd millennium BCE. It is believed that Benedictine monks introduced them to the village in the Middle Age. San Benedetto is the only place where the *gliu piàschie*, as the locks are called in local dialect, exist in Abruzzo. They were also in use until the 1800s in a few locations in the region of Apulia and, outside Italy, can still be found in Mali, Niger and Benin. Each lock is made from oak wood and consists of a box, a sliding bolt and a key. The inserted key pushes the notches into the slots and the bolt is released. All locks had a different notch pattern but were easy enough to open, as they were meant to prevent animals from entering the dwellings rather than deter thieves.

Despite their rarity, the regional government has not made any attempts to safeguard the wooden locks of San Benedetto in Perillis. A local cultural association has compiled a small collection of wooden keys from the ruins and demolished houses, which is kept in the Museum of Peasant Culture (see below). It remains somewhat of a mystery why these ancient locks survived only in this village and nowhere else in Abruzzo.

MUSEUM OF PEASANT CULTURE

In the museum, you can see how the wooden locks work and also browse a collection of fossils found in the area. In a separate room, rolls of beautiful old fabrics made by hand are displayed and an old weaving loom is set up – complete with a metal candle holder attached to it and a pot for hot coals that women kept at their feet to stay warm while working. Among the fabrics is an embroidered white linen necktie, a *pegno d'amore*, or a token of love, that young women of San Benedetto used to make for their beloved. They were worn by men for special celebrations.

In the space downstairs, a beautiful old oil press (*gliù trappùte* in local dialect) has been preserved. It is a lever press, with origins going back to ancient Greece, one of very few remaining in Abruzzo.

Wooden keys and locks in the village



Although the date chiselled on one of the beams by one of the last owners is 1875, it is believed that the press was constructed well before then. During olive harvests, it worked non-stop for two months, day and night.

CHURCHES

The two small churches in the village, the 13th century Chiesa di San Sebastiano, which used to be outside the town's walls, and Chiesa della Madonna delle Grazie have characteristic low windows. Shepherds, who couldn't leave their flocks unattended, watched the Mass from outside through these windows.





Clockwise: Chiesa di San Sebastiano, a street in the village, an abandoned house, a fresco in San Benedetto Abbey

SAN BENEDETTO ABBEY

Founded in the 8th century, the Abbey of San Benedetto is one of the oldest in Abruzzo, with fragments of beautiful early medieval frescoes. Money had been allocated for its restoration some years ago, but bureaucratic delays haven't allowed the works to start yet. The old part of the village, around the abbey, has retained its medieval character with fortified walls, and a few towers are still standing.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

To visit the museum and the grottos, call the town hall at 0039 0862955148 or email at sanbenedettoinperillis@pec.it. The local administration is very friendly and is always happy to promote their little village. Even though the old centre is fenced off, you can ask them to show you around (no English spoken).



BYZANTINE CULTURE IN THE HEART OF ABRUZZO

By Giorgio Mendicini

Villa Badessa, a small village in the province of Pescara, has a population of about 400 souls and boasts a stunning collection, unique in Italy, of 77 Byzantine icons dating from the 15th to the 20th century.

The major national tourist organisation, Touring Club Italiano, in its popular series of guide-books recommends a stop in Villa Badessa to admire the collection, calling it one of the fifteen "must-see" destinations in the region.

Villa Badessa is one of the several Italian Albanian communities (Arbëreshe) spread throughout Southern Italy. These diasporas were formed between the 14th and 18th centuries when groups of Albanian refugees fled religious persecutions when the Balkans were invaded by the Ottoman Empire. The founders of Villa Badessa were the last to arrive and set up the only Arbëreshe community in Abruzzo in 1743. Other Arbëreshe communities are found in Molise, Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria and Sicily.

STRONG CONNECTION

Despite the perilous journey, the people of Villa Badessa brought the centuries-old collection of Byzantine icons and, like other Arbëreshe communities in Southern Italy, have maintained a strong connection to their origins: attachment to the Greek-Byzantine Catholic rite, and lovingly preserved civil and religious rituals. The village's parish of Santa Maria Assunta is part of the Italo-Greek diocese of Lungro in Cosenza, Calabria. The liturgy service sang in Greek, wedding ceremonies, greeting chants in the Albanian language called Kalimere, the Great Holy Week and commemoration of the dead are all fervently observed in the village.



Two villagers dressed in traditional Arbëreshe costumes

The Cultural Association Villa Badessa organises various events to preserve the traditions. In particular, the cult of the dead is very much felt which, according to the Byzantine ritual, is celebrated in February, eleven days from Ash Wednesday. In Arbëreshe communities it is customary to dedicate a week to the memory of the dead. It is believed that Jesus Christ gives permission to the souls of the dead to leave the afterlife for eight days to return to our world and see the places where they lived. In all the houses, during this week, lamps are kept lit, powered by oil, so that the dead



Byzantine icons from the collection

Gara di Ruzzola

entering are not in complete darkness. Furthermore, meals are eaten near the graves of loved ones, and anyone who passes by is invited.

This is a traditional competition that dates back to the Etruscan era and takes place every year in Villa Badessa on May 1. Locals throw wheels of aged, hard pecorino cheese on the roads of the village. The winner is the one who has thrown the wheel the farthest, and receives the cheese of all the participants.

WHAT TO SEE IN VILLA BADESSA

The Church of Santa Maria Assunta

Built in 1754, this small church is the only one in Abruzzo which follows the Greek-Byzantine rites. Here you can admire 77 precious icons on the side walls.

Museum

A small ethnographic museum dedicated to the history of the local Arbëreshe community is located in one of the first houses built in the 18th century by the newly arrived settlers. Open on Saturday and Sunday mornings. To book your visit (in Italian), contact the *Associazione Culturale Villa Badessa* at 0039 348 7374449 or email info@villabadessa.it.

The feast of Maria Odigitria

On September 8, Villa Badessa celebrates Maria Odigitria (Our Lady of the Way) with an evocative evening procession and "enkomia", the weeping of women during the night vigil over the icon of Christ's deposition.

Easter celebrations

On Easter Sunday, the villagers walk holding torches that illuminate the last hours of the night in a great silence. After the morning liturgy, everyone exchanges greetings by giving each other painted and decorated eggs.

Giorgio Mendicini is a journalist, history and photography enthusiast living in L'Aquila. The article was first published on [Abruzzo Travel and Food](#). Translation and additional reporting by Anna Lebedeva.

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A LOCAL IN POPOLI

By Linda Dini Jenkins

After spending some time in Abruzzo, Italian American artist Karin Giusti bought a ruin in Popoli a few years ago, and then the adjoining house, as well. She has grand plans for the space but, at the end of the day, wants nothing more than to be a genuine part of the life of this vibrant, authentic community.

“My family comes from Tuscany,” says Karin Giusti. “From the Lucca and Pisa areas. I visited as an adult and realized this [Italy] was where I belonged.” She received her Italian citizenship in 2015 and began looking for property on the internet. While she was looking, Abruzzo kept coming up – affordable, incredibly beautiful, and not too far away. She took the leap and moved to Abruzzo to check it out: first to Sulmona, and then to Roccacasale, before she got a text from a friend about a ruin in Popoli.

SWEET OLD HOUSE

“It was this pure and sweet stone house in the old part of Popoli, clinging to a rock wall,” she describes. “This area was filled with *nonne*, was very affordable, and it truly was love at first sight.” It was also just 50 steps from the famous [Terme di Popoli](#). One of the main attractions of the ruin – which took about six months to renovate – was its old, vaulted ceilings. At one point, a wooden roof had to be replaced and, says Karin, “It was like watching artists at work as they completed the job.” Both houses came with cantinas, which will be very



Karin Giusti

useful to her as she progresses with her plans. “I came here to work,” she declares. “Not to retire.”

Karen Giusti, originally from Michigan (her grandfather came to the US in 1917 to work in the copper mines there), graduated from the University of Massachusetts/Amherst and went on to receive an MFA from the Yale University School of Art. She is a mixed media artist, teacher and lecturer, and her work – a fusion of photography, weaving, and sculpture – has been exhibited around the world.

She was called from Popoli to Providence, Rhode Island in January 2020 for an installation and, as she says with a sigh, was trapped in the US because of the lockdown. But her time has not been wasted. After installing her [Dreamweave for a Third Space](#) at the Providence Civic Center, she turned her attention to the project she would most like to bring to Popoli when she gets back.

INSPIRING LANDSCAPES

Popoli is a lively market town with a glorious past, cosy cafes and elegant palaces in the old historic centre. Home to just over 5000 people, it is famous for its connections with Corradino D'Ascanio, the celebrated inventor of the iconic Vespa scooter who was born here.

Abruzzo in general, and Popoli in particular, provide an inspiring setting for Karin's art and imagination. "Oh, those landscapes," she says, barely containing her enthusiasm. She's done a 360-degree portrait of Roccacasale, a small village nearby, and has already been invited to three villages to do her installations. Not bad for a *straniera* who has lived in Popoli full-time for less than two years!

But at the top of her list when she gets back to Popoli is to create a non-profit association that will offer on-site Artist in Residence programs, and she's in the process of looking for funding right now. There's even the possibility of purchasing a nearby third building which would be used exclusively for a Writers' Residency program. She hopes to make the artistic world aware of this part of Abruzzo and help artists create photography, painting, sculpture, words and much more by taking inspiration from the stunning surroundings and the more traditional lifestyle that Abruzzo offers.

Asked what people who are thinking about coming to Abruzzo should know, Karin is quick to answer. "Learn some Italian," she says. "Some of the most beautiful areas are very rural and most people don't speak English. Make an effort to learn at least the basics."



Popoli. Photos via [Comune di Popoli](#)

Finally, she advises, don't try to impose your way of doing things on people and don't expect work to progress the way it would where you come from. Chances are, it won't. But that's why you're here.

She advises that, if you don't want to own a car, explore the villages that are well serviced by train and/or bus. Public transportation is very good here and lots of people get around this way. When Karin gets back to Abruzzo, her priority will be to go to driving school to get her Italian licence.

When you're next in Popoli (once everybody can return), look Karin up and invite her for a coffee. She will be happy to talk about her life in Abruzzo and share her local expertise. You can see some of Karin's installations [here](#).

Linda Dini Jenkins leads small tours to Italy and blogs about travel at [Travel Italy The Write Way](#).

SNOWSHOEING IN A WINTER WONDERLAND

By Dougie Reid

Not into skiing but still want to explore Abruzzo's wilderness in winter? Snowshoeing is the perfect way to see the region's most spectacular corners this season.



Above Passo Godi, Scanno

My first experience of snowshoeing wasn't much fun . . . it was in Norway, temperatures were around -30°C, I was carrying a heavy backpack and being regularly shouted at by a Royal Marine Mountain Leader to "get up that **** hill." So when I was asked to go snowshoeing with a friend in Abruzzo, I was somewhat reluctant. Needless to say, it was much more enjoyable than I had expected and I've never looked back.

Abruzzo is the perfect winter wonderland for snowshoeing. With kilometres of fields and mountain paths, from wide open mountain plains to narrow woodland tracks full of fresh snow – often with the only other signs of life

being the tracks of the animals that have ventured out before you – you can wander for hours in a white wilderness.

WHY SNOWSHOEING?

So, how has what started thousands of years ago as an essential mode of winter transportation evolved into a popular sport/pastime? If you've never done it before, you might ask, why even go snowshoeing? Well, here are a few good reasons:

It's great winter exercise. If you're looking for a way to stay in shape out in the fresh air, even when the snow starts to fall, snowshoeing is a really good low-impact aerobic exercise, burning up to 900 calories per hour!

If you love getting into the mountains, you can extend your hiking season year-round and keep discovering the stunning scenery that Abruzzo has to offer from a whole new perspective. On the trips I've taken, I've rarely seen another set of snowshoe prints, and that sensation of breaking through fresh powder snow on a crystal-clear winter's day is exhilarating.

It doesn't have to be a big hike – getting out on snowshoes can be just taking your dog for a walk even when there's fresh deep snow.

All ages and ability levels can enjoy the sport together, as long as you plan your outing with everyone's fitness in mind. It can be tough going and it'll certainly give you a good workout, even over a short distance.

If you already have a decent set of hiking boots and some good outdoor clothing, it is an inexpensive hobby compared to other winter sports. Kit hire and lift-passes for skiing and snowboarding, for example, can be very expensive. But once you've bought your equipment – which itself is much cheaper than equipment for other popular winter sports – snowshoeing is pretty much free.

THE BASICS

There aren't many outdoor activities that are as beginner-friendly as snowshoeing. It requires only a few basic techniques (walking) to be competent enough across easy ground. However, if you plan to venture off easy trails, or want to head up into the mountains, you'll need to learn how to go up and down hills, traverse slopes, use your poles and learn how to avoid and prepare for avalanches.



Snowshoeing extends your hiking season year-round

Due to the shape and orientation of the Abruzzo mountains, there is a risk of avalanches on some slopes. If you are unsure about the area you plan to go to, make sure you research well and employ the services of a professional snowshoeing guide in risk areas.

Decathlon has a good range of snowshoes to suit every budget (they are called *ciaspole* in Italian; prices start from €50). Make sure you choose a pair to suit your weight and, if you can afford it, get a pair with the 'up/down feature'. This allows your foot to 'drop through' the snowshoe outer, making descents much easier. Poles are optional but certainly help you keep your balance when you are learning.



Passo San Leonardo

As with any mountain excursion (snowshoeing is no exception) your safety is paramount. Make sure that you leave details of your planned route with someone and an estimated return time. Should anything happen during your excursion, you will be safe in the knowledge that someone is aware of where you are and can alert the authorities if you are not back when you plan to be.

ITINERARIES

The list of places to snowshoe in Abruzzo is almost endless, but here are some of my favourite locations to get you started:

BOSCO DI SANT'ANTONIO, PESCOSTANZO

The gently rolling slopes of this ancient beech woodland, that plays such an important part in the history and culture of the internal Abruzzo mountain landscape, are easy to tackle for all abilities. Set in stunning surroundings, the trails are well marked and easy to

follow. Snowshoes are available to hire from the Ski Touring School hut in the Bosco di Sant'Antonio parking area.

PASSO SAN LEONARDO

The forests on the slopes of the Morrone mountain range by Passo San Leonardo are good for all abilities. Park at the hotel and head into the forests behind it. In the woods the slopes are fairly gentle, and therefore suited to all abilities, but with opportunities to tackle more challenging areas and push yourself further, should you want to.

INTRODACQUA

There's the valley leading up to Rifugio la Defenz (Defenz mountain hut) above Introdacqua. Starting from Introdacqua village, take the path up past the small

but beautiful 16th Century church of Sant' Antonio, and then continue up the valley on CAI path route 2 towards Monte Genzana. This is a route of medium difficulty and you should have a reasonable level of fit-ness to tackle it. A perfect day out would be snowshoeing up to Rifugio Defenz for a packed lunch and then retracing your path back to the village. The hut is always open and has a table and seating area.

FROM BLOCKHAUS TO MONTE CAVALLO

Parking is at Villaggio Mira Stelle. This is a route suitable for more advanced snowshoers and mountaineers. In the winter, the main road is usually closed due to the snow. If the road is closed, head up to the *rifugio* by La Majelletta and follow the direction of the track to the Madonnina del Blockhaus statue. This is a good walk on its own, but if you feel you want to do more you can at this point head up to the peak above at 2140m. If you still feel fresh, extend even further by heading along the ridge up to Monte Cavallo peak at 2171m.

PASSO GODI, SCANNO

There are a vast numbers of routes you can take by just parking up at Passo Godi and

Passo Lanciano near Blockhaus



heading out on your snowshoes. From easy to difficult, you can make excursions here as straightforward or as strenuous as you like. The *rifugi* at the pass are open year-round and are a great place to stop and have a bite to eat after a day out in the mountains.

Local sections of the Italian Alpine Club (CAI) organise snowshoeing excursions over the winter months. Contacting your local CAI to go out with them can be a great way to meet other winter mountain sport enthusiasts from your local community. In addition, guides from Maj-ambiente, AMA Trekking, Majaexperience have regular group outings on snowshoes throughout the winter.

Dougie Reid is an ex Royal Navy Officer & now an RN reservist living in Abruzzo. A qualified survival instructor, he loves mountain sports and is a passionate road cyclist.



CHRISTMAS SPECIAL



FOOD & WINE,
TRADITIONAL
RECIPES

SPECIAL FIGS FROM ATESSA

By Luana Tusset

Atezza is a charming town located in the Sangro Valley in the province of Chieti and, together with Torino di Sangro, Archi, Perano e Paglieta, has a strongly rooted tradition of making dried figs. For centuries, the region had been home to an important dried fig market, but the industrial development of the 1970s rendered its agricultural production obsolete. Recently, a few young entrepreneurs have decided to revive the ancient tradition of growing and drying the figs with the support of the Slow Food Presidia Project.

Figs have been cultivated in the area since the ancient past. A group of archeologists from Oberlin College, USA, and Oxford University, UK, discovered a carbonized dried fig in a Roman villa in the locality of Acquachiera, an area near Atezza, that they dated to the 1st century BCE. In the local dialect, the dried figs are called *li caracine*, which most likely refers to one of the tribes, *i carracini*, who lived in the territory during the Roman times.

In 1320, Robert of Anjou, King of Naples – to which Atezza belonged – imposed a tax on its dried figs traded by sea. In the following centuries, the dried figs continued to have a central role in the local economy, being used for a variety of purposes, from a trade good to medicine and gifts. For good reason, the people of Atezza are called *squacciafichere* (loosely translated as “fig squeezer”), which implies someone with great skills of preparing figs for drying.

Figs are harvested and dried from the middle of August to the end of September, depending on the weather. The Reale fig variety has a pale greenish-yellow skin with juicy, honey-flavored flesh considered ideal for drying. “The cultivation is rigorously organic, without use of chemicals or synthetic fertilizers,” explains Vincenzo Menna, a member of the association of the Atezza Reale Fig producers. “We pick the figs by hand early in the morning, then lay them on drying racks made out of small canes (*cannizzi*) tied together.” They can be dried whole or partially cut in half, but not completely split. The figs are dried in the sun covered by a net to keep insects away and, in the evening, they are brought inside to prevent the excess of humidity. The process goes on for





several days, to the point in which the figs are dried but still soft. They are then stuffed with a walnut kernel and stored with bay leaves in a dark dry place. *Li caracine* are ready to be enjoyed from early October. During Christmas time, the Atessa dried figs are centerstage in some traditional recipes: cookies, jams, breads and traditional sweets such as the nougat and the *squacciata*, which is a type of nougat covered with chocolate. Or you can simply eat them with a nice glass of *vino cotto* (See the article in our Wine sections).

You can buy organic dried Atessa Reale figs (*Il fico secco reale di Atessa*) online on [Abruzzo Natural](#) or from the Slow Food producer [Azienda Agrituristica La Ruelle](#). Contact Vincenzo Menna for a list of other producers (vincenzo.menna66@gmail.com)

Dried figs are always present on festive tables in Abruzzo. Try this Christmas recipe popular with the locals.

SPICED DRIED FIGS IN CHOCOLATE

INGREDIENTS:

Atessa dried figs, toasted almonds, melted dark chocolate, ground cloves and slices of candied lemon.

Place one almond inside each fig, together with a pinch of ground cloves and a candied lemon slice. Close the figs gently and dip them in the melted chocolate. Put them on a greaseproof baking paper to dry. Serve as a dessert at the end of your big Christmas meal.

Luana Tusset is an Italian-Brazilian restaurateur based in Abruzzo. She is the co-founder of the Brazilian Slow Food Convivium "Primeira Colônia Italiana".



CHRISTMAS THISTLE SOUP

Courtesy of [Abruzzo With Gusto](#)

Christmas festivities in Abruzzo mean gargantuan feasts. However, there are some dishes that are meant to give you a break from the heavy meals. Thistle, or cardoon soup (*zuppa di cardo*), is one of them although, as calorie count goes, it is still quite rich. In Abruzzo, thistle stalks are called “Christmas greens” and the soup is traditionally made for *pranzo natalizio*, lunch on December 25.

Several Italian regions have a version of this soup. In Molise, it is made in a capon broth. In Piedmont, butter is added and in Apulia, tomatoes. If you are wondering what cardoon is, imagine a thistle-like plant with impressive large leaves that look like those of an artichoke but with smaller flower buds. The stems are cleaned, chopped and cooked in soups and pies. Small green grocers, as well as bigger supermarkets, sell pre-packed chopped cardoon, although the real Italian mammas prefer buying fresh bunches at farmers’ markets and cleaning them at home. Many families add a personal touch to the recipe: the soup can be served with toasted croutons, a sprinkle of nutmeg, a squeeze of lemon juice or small pieces of omelette (*frittata*). Here is the basic recipe for the most commonly used Christmas Thistle Soup from Abruzzo.

INGREDIENTS

Makes 4-5 portions

500g cardoon, cleaned and chopped
 200g premium minced veal
 2 eggs
 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
 50g breadcrumbs
 2 tbsp olive oil
 2 tbsp parsley, chopped
 2 tbsp parmigiano reggiano or pecorino cheese, grated
 Salt and pepper to taste



PREPARATION

Put the cardoon in a pot with 2 litres of water and bring it to boil. In the meantime, thoroughly mix the veal mince with one egg and breadcrumbs. Make small meatballs (about 1 cm in diameter). Brown them in a frying pan in olive oil with garlic. Put the meatballs and garlic in the soup and cook for 30-35 minutes.

Beat the remaining egg in a small bowl, slowly pour it into the pot while swirling the soup with a spoon to form thin egg strands. Cook it for another minute. Season and serve with parsley, a sprinkle of cheese and a drizzle of olive oil.

If you prefer the cardoon to be soft rather than slightly crunchy, add 15 minutes to cooking time.

Buon appetito e Buon Natale!

A SWEET END TO A GRAND MEAL

By Anna Swann

Sweet wines (*vini dolci*) from Abruzzo are rarely mentioned and very few producers here make them, but they deserve a special place on your table.

If you think of syrupy cheap concoctions that are often passed for dessert wines outside of Italy, think again. Abruzzo's *vini dolci* are complex, classy drinks with a long history. There are two distinctive traditions of dessert wines in the region: *vino cotto* and *passito*. *Vino cotto* is made by slowly cooking grape must to make a thick sweet reduction that is mixed with non-cooked juice and left to ferment in small wooden barrels. The wine can be stored for decades with annual top-ups of fresh juice. While I am listing it here as a dessert wine, *vino cotto* is also paired with cured meats and cheese. It is really a category apart and merits a separate article.

A centuries-old tradition of *passito* wine exists in Castiglione a Casauria. Since the 1600s, local families cultivated a fragrant white grape called Moscatello that almost disappeared but was saved by the Angelucci winery (it has been recently sold and renamed Tenuta Secolo IX). The stems of the ripe bunches are squeezed and left to "wither" on the vine for a few weeks (other producers dry grapes on racks). This is done to increase the flavour and sugar concentration. I love the original Angelucci Moscatello that is very hard, but not impossible, to find today. (Try Googling Moscatello passito IGT Angelucci to find a few Italian sellers).

If you are not a big fan of dessert wines, there are a few excellent sweetened Montepulciano masterpieces made in the region, which are a blend of Montepulciano d'Abruzzo with some *passito*. The result is a rich, jammy broody wine with a higher sugar content, perfect to accompany desserts, as well as strong liver or wild boar dishes. It is a daunting process to make wines from dried grapes, so the yield is limited and prices are high.

Here are my favourite picks from the region to pair with your luscious Christmas desserts.



1. CANTUS VINO COTTO – TENUTA I FAURI

100% Montepulciano d'Abruzzo. Rich, dark and thick with notes of dates and chestnut.

Buy: Tannico.it or directly from the [winery](#).

Price: €20

2. MOSCATELLO PASSITO IGT – TENUTA SECOLO IX

100% Moscato bianco "Casauriense" biotype. Grapes dried on the vine, gently pressed. Aged in wooden barrels for at least four years. Beautiful golden hues. Intensely aromatic with hints of dried figs and apricots. Serve cool.

Buy: Wineowine.it or directly from the [winery](#).

Price: €20

3. PASSITO CLEMATIS – ZACCAGNINI

100% Montepulciano d'Abruzzo. Smooth and velvety, with warm notes of cinnamon, blackberry jam and alcohol-infused cherries. Aged three years in small French oak barrels.

Buy: Callmewine.com or selected wine shops worldwide.

Price: €35-40

4. ROSSO JARNO – CASTORANI

100% Montepulciano d'Abruzzo. A complex symphony of black currant, liquorice, prunes and vanilla accents. Aged 24 months in large tonneau barrels, six months in concrete tanks and 12 months in bottle. Pair with chocolate, duck or blue cheese.

Buy: Callmewine.com or directly from the [producer](#)

Price: from €30



IL PARROZZO: THE CHRISTMAS CAKE FROM PESCARA

By Michela Portacci

If you ask me, the best traditional cake ever is the *parrozzo* from Pescara! But I am biased: born and bred in the city, crazy about chocolate and almonds, I could eat *parozzo* all year round but, sticking with the tradition, in my family we make it only for Christmas. It is the perfect present to bring when you visit relatives and friends over the holidays.

This traditional Christmas cake was invented nearly 100 years ago, in a pastry shop in the heart of the old town of Pescara. A man called Luigi D'Amico had a "sweet intuition" and decided to create a cake inspired by the shape and the colors of a peasant corn bread called *pane rozzo* (rough bread). He made a heavenly, dome-shaped sponge covered with dark chocolate.

Egg yolks make the dough bright yellow, imitating the corn, and the dark chocolate coating recalls charred bread baked in a wood oven. D'Amico's friend, the famous poet Gabriele D'Annunzio, who lived a few blocks from him, came up with the

perfect name, *parrozzo*. It was an immediate success, so much so that the *parrozzo* trademark was registered in 1926. Even the family's café was named after the cake — *Il ritrovo del parrozzo* (The Hangout of the Parrozzo) — and it was one of the busiest and most elegant meeting places in Pescara before World War II.

Below is the recipe that we use in my family. It was given to me by our friend Signora Annarita from Spoltore, who is a walking encyclopedia of traditional Abruzzese cuisine. The recipe is simple. The tricky part is to take the cake out of the oven at exactly the right moment: it has to be not too dry and not too moist. But that comes with practice, so perfecting the *parrozzo* could be your excuse for baking it all year around, not just for Christmas! The classic *parrozzo* is dome-shaped and is made with a special cake pan. Most kitchen supply shops in Pescara sell them in different sizes.

IL PARROZZO

INGREDIENTS

Makes a 22 cm diameter cake

- 6 eggs
- 120g semolina flour
- 160g almonds, chopped finely
- 7-8 bitter almonds, chopped finely
- 250g sugar
- Juice and zest of half a lemon
- 200g dark chocolate
- 1 tsp olive oil (1 teaspoon)

PREPARATION

Pre-heat the oven in static mode to 180 °C. Separate egg whites and yolks. Whip the egg whites with a pinch of salt.

In a separate bowl, whip the yolks with sugar, then add juice and lemon zest. Combine the whipped parts, pouring the yolks into the whites and not the other way around (it's important because you don't want the amount of air in the mixture to increase).

Add the semolina flour and the chopped almonds, gently mixing everything together. Bitter almonds are the special ingredient because they give an amazing flavour.



Grease the cake pan, sprinkling it with a little flour (shake the pan upside down to eliminate the excess flour). Pour the mix in the pan. Bake for 45 minutes.

In the meantime, melt the dark chocolate, placing it on a plate over a saucepan with boiling water. Add a teaspoon of olive oil to the chocolate to give it brightness and mix with a fork.

When the *parrozzo* is baked, let it cool for five minutes before removing it from the pan by turning it over onto a plate.

Finally, pour the melted chocolate to top of the *parrozzo* and spread it with a wide knife or a pastry brush. Leave it to dry in a cool place for a couple of hours.

To cut the *parrozzo* without breaking the chocolate crust use a serrated knife, preferably warm.

Michela Portacci works in the regional government and is passionate about promoting Abruzzo and its traditions.

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TRADITIONAL (AND YUMMY) NUTTY DESSERTS

By Mary Vischetti

These two Christmas recipes are typical for the Province of L'Aquila, where walnuts and almonds grow in abundance. They only call for a few ingredients and can be made well before the holiday season.

WALNUT AND HONEY BRITTLE

In my town of Capistrello, the nut brittle has been made for centuries. Here it is called *copeta* and is made with local walnuts and mountain fragrant honey. In late autumn, the elderly members of the family shell the nuts and prepare them for the future *copeta*. My grandmother Maria and my great aunt Carmela usually did this job together, along with a few neighbours. They spent this time chatting and sometimes even ended up arguing about something meaningless!

The preparation of the brittle is always a celebration before the celebration, a few days before Christmas. The whole family gets together one evening and makes the *copeta* with sticky, honey-covered hands. The younger members of the family are in charge of quality control of the chopped nuts, making sure there aren't any hard shell bits. However, the *copeta* itself is prepared by the men of the family. When I was a kid, my grandfather Mario made it and in my husband's home, my father-in-law Gino did. Some families cut diamond-shaped slices and layered them with laurel leaves for an extra flavour.



INGREDIENTS

1 kg walnuts chopped into small pieces (with a knife, not a food processor)
600g fragrant wildflower honey

PREPARATION

Warm up the honey in a pot and let it boil until it turns a darker caramel colour. Drop a little bit of honey in a glass with cold water. If it turns into a toffee ball, it is ready!

Add the nuts to the honey. Stir them continuously (here's where the man's muscle power comes in handy!) so the

brittle doesn't stick to the bottom of the pot. Keep the heat low and cook the mixture for approximately 20 minutes, stirring it constantly.

Put all the cooked honey-nut mixture on a cold wet marble or wood counter or a tray and press it down with a wet rolling pin or a large spoon. Make the layer about ½ cm thick and cut into small square or diamond-shaped pieces. Put the pieces on a tray lined with parchment paper or laurel leaves and store in a cool place for up to 20 days. The copeta is much softer than the usual brittle but it will harden if you make it thinner.

“DIRTY ALMONDS”

You will often find this simple treat at town festival food stalls and on festive tables for Christmas. In my hometown, we call them *nucci*, which simply means nuts but in other parts of Abruzzo they are called *nocci attorati* or *nucci n'terrati*, because they seem to have dirt on them (*terra* means dirt). Not very appetising but, trust me, they are delicious.



INGREDIENTS

200g almonds, whole unblanched
200g sugar
1/3 glass of water
1 teaspoon cocoa (optional)

PREPARATION

Mix all the ingredients in a pan and place over a moderate heat. The sugar will melt and after a while will start to caramelize. Stir constantly, allowing the mix to caramelize and turn brown and making sure all the nuts are well coated.

Remove from the heat and spread the almonds on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper, until they have completely cooled.

Mary Vischetti lives in Abruzzo and writes a food blog [Un'Americana Tra gli Orsi](#).

LIVE COOKING CLASS



Join Mary for a live demonstration to learn how to make two types of "dirty almonds". Watch the class on our [Facebook page](#) on December 4 at 5pm CEST.

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Castel del Monte. Photo by Mauro Cironi

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Ciao a tutti!

I truly appreciate the good cheer and support I receive in your emails! Your New Year's wishes and generous donations are heart-warming and encouraging. Thank you! Although 2021 has begun on a positive note, with hope for all of us, it might not be possible for everyone to travel far yet. So ABRUZZISSIMO will continue to help you dream, build your travel bucket list, and keep the connection with your beloved Abruzzo alive.

This year's first issue will take you on a tour of the poignant memorials to the soldiers fallen in World War II and tell you the story of the beautiful *presentosa* jewellery. You will learn about the little-known carnival tradition of the *Pulcinella Abruzzese* in Castiglione Messer Marino, and stroll under the medieval archways of Castel Del Monte. Read about the courageous young woman from Yorkshire, UK who moved to Abruzzo alone to set up a successful business on page 19. Finally, we'll share a traditional recipe of the carnival cake *cicerchia* and talk about not widely known wines from Tollo.

If you want to become a supporter of ABRUZZISSIMO, please [send your donations here](#). Your support helps me to continue inviting the best authors to share their knowledge and passion for Abruzzo with you.

If you have an idea for a story, drop me a line at editor@abruzzissimo.com.

Happy reading!

A presto,

Anna Lebedeva

Editor



MICHETTI'S MASTERPIECE

After restoration work, *The Daughter of Iorio* – painted by Francesco Paolo Michetti – has returned to be on public display in Pescara. The grand masterpiece, over five metres long and almost three metres wide, was created in 1895 and since has become a symbol of Abruzzo. It depicts a peasant girl shyly hurrying past a group of men staring at her, with the magnificent snow-capped Majella peak as a backdrop. The painting can be seen during business hours in the Palazzo della Provincia.

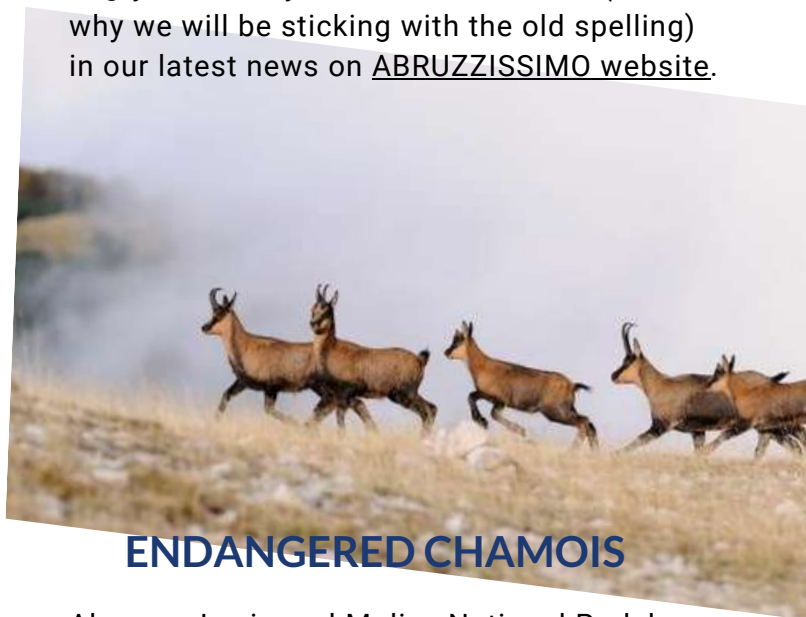


COMPETITION WINNER

We are delighted to announce the winner of our Abruzzo in Photos competition. Trish Ellse's beautiful photo of an Abruzzese sheepdog with the snow-covered town of Pacentro in the background has received the highest number of like on our Facebook page. Trish says Abruzzo is her favourite region in Italy and she holidays in Pacentro as often as she can. She took the photo a few years ago and it also happens to be her favourite snapshot of all time. The prize, a copy of *Abruzzo History and Art Guide* by Carsa Edizioni, is on its way to the winner's home in Norfolk, UK.

MAJELLA NATIONAL PARK CHANGES ITS NAME

The letter "j" in the park's name has been replaced with an "i". And people of Abruzzo are angry. Read why it is no trivial matter (and why we will be sticking with the old spelling) in our latest news on [ABRUZZISSIMO website](#).



ENDANGERED CHAMOIS

Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park has published optimistic results of its annual Apennine chamois count campaign. In 2020, a minimum of 675 chamois have been spotted and 138 new kids were born on the park's territory. The park's officials are optimistic about the stability of the chamois population, but the species is still in danger of extinction, with only 3500 living across the Apennine mountains in Europe. You can spot the Apennine chamois while hiking at higher altitudes in the Majella National Park, Abruzzo National Park and, at a closer distance, in the nature reserve [La Camosciara](#) in Civititella Alfedena.

ONLINE COOKING LESSONS

Our sister company, Abruzzo With Gusto, continues its popular virtual cooking classes. On February 18, you can learn to cook two traditional dishes: *cannelloni di scrippelle* (thin crepe rolls with a cheese or artichoke filling, depending on your choice and availability) and *agnello cacio e ova* (lamb with cheese and eggs). On February 25 and March 18, join the class to make scrumptious traditional Abruzzese desserts: *bocconotti* and *uccelleti ripieni* cakes. See the details and book the classes on the [Abruzzo With Gusto website](#).

DID YOU KNOW?

RICE SMUGGLERS IN ABRUZZO

In the late 18th century, rice contraband was a way to make good money in Abruzzo. The State Archives of the Teramo Province stores a significant collection of documents that draw a fascinating picture of the widespread illegal obsession with the cereal: "Arrest record of a mule loaded with 90 pounds of white rice intended for a prelate of Campoli residing in L'Aquila, which was delivered to an entrusted person. Campoli, 1796 . . . Arrest record of Bruni Giuseppe of Corropoli and two animals loaded with 700 pounds of rice. Corropoli, 1791." Some smugglers were ferrying rice to ships on the coast that were to take it overseas; others wouldn't reveal the final destination of their precious cargo even under a threat of imprisonment.

Rice cultivation started in Abruzzo in the mid-15th century and was at its peak in the 1700s. Paddy fields were spread along the Vomano, Tordino, and Tronto Rivers in the north of Abruzzo. With the rise of malaria, rice cultivation was restricted and moved away from towns and villages. On top of that, water mill owners complained continuously that rice paddies captured the water they needed for milling grains.

So, eventually, a total ban was issued. However, rice cultivation continued illegally for decades, relying on well-established contraband routes with donkeys, mules, horses, and small boats transporting rice within and beyond the Kingdom of Naples. Aristocrats and high-ranking members of the clergy were prepared to pay smugglers from Abruzzo good money to bring the sought-after cereal to their tables.



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POIGNANT MEMORIALS TO THE LIVES LOST IN THE WAR

By Michela Portacci

In Abruzzo, two beautiful war cemeteries, in Torino di Sangro and Ortona, remind us of the bloody battles fought by the Allied Forces in 1943.



The Moro River Canadian War Cemetery. Photo via cwgc.org

“Quand è brutt la guerr, nanno’” – “How terrible a war is, granddaughter” – my grandfather used to say to me. He escaped from the collapsed family shop during the bombings in Pescara in 1943 that destroyed more than 70% of the city. He told me stories about hunger, fear, ambushes by the Germans, the arrival of the Allied Forces, the partisans – all things that should not be forgotten. Some years ago, I took our young Canadian au pair to see the war cemeteries and she said the words that have stayed with me ever since: “Everyone coming to visit Abruzzo should bring a flower to these men.”

THE BATTLES

In the autumn of 1943, the American and British Allied armies began to move from the south of the Italian Peninsula. The Germans waited for them along the Gustav Line (also called the Winter Line), a series of fortifications in the narrowest point of the peninsula, taking advantage of the natural barriers between the Sangro River in Abruzzo and Garigliano River in Lazio. They prepared heavily fortified defensive positions ready to stand their ground and fight.

On November 3, the allies entered Abruzzo, quickly liberating the town of San Salvo. Then they headed to Torino di Sangro and settled

along the southern banks of the river, preparing for the important attack on The Winter Line. General Montgomery's order to start the battle arrived on the night of November 27, 1943. It lasted three days and cost many human lives. Retreating to the north, the German troops settled on the Moro river, near Ortona. On December 6, the 1st Canadian Division went to cross the Moro river to take Ortona. Another long bloody battle ensued with many soldiers and civilians being killed.

AFTER THE WAR

Seventy-seven years have passed, but those who sacrificed their lives in those battles have not been forgotten. The fallen soldiers rest in two war cemeteries: the Sangro River War Cemetery, near Torino di Sangro, and the Moro River War Cemetery, near Ortona. Both are looked after by the Commonwealth War Grave Commission (CWGC). On the [CWGC website](#) you can find records with the names, age of the soldiers, the words their family chose for the headstone as well as images of the original war registers.

The sites of the cemeteries were chosen in the days following the fighting located in the immediate vicinity of the battlefields. The 5th Allied Army buried their fallen comrades despite the freezing rain and snow, placing wooden crosses on the graves.

Immediately after the war, Louis de Soissons, a British architect of Canadian descent, was entrusted with the task of turning the cemeteries into memorials. It was a heart-felt task for the architect, as he lost his son during the war, which meant he was able to convey a deep sense of love and loss in his work.

These places today look like splendid gardens, with carefully thought-out details, where even the flowering of plants is meant to "accompany" the fallen soldiers



The Moro River Canadian War Cemetery. Photo by Mammix Production/Facebook

throughout the year. Native plants of the countries of origin of the fallen soldiers were used wherever possible, creating an emotional association between home gardens and the foreign fields where these men were laid forever.

Every time I walk here, I feel moved. It is heart-breaking to see how young most of those soldiers were. Some of them remained unknown with only "known unto God" written on their headstone. Some graves have inscriptions in Arabic, Hindu, or Jewish symbols. I can't help but think that the God they prayed to in their last hour had different names, but they all shared the same tragic destiny: to die in a faraway, foreign land. The youngest soldier's grave I've seen shows that he was only 16. His name was Gordon E. Ott, Canadian. On his tombstone his family inscribed, "He signed his name for victory and after a time they put it on a cross."

When I visit those cemeteries, I feel dismay, pain, empathy towards families, but also a profound sense of peace.



The Sangro River War Cemetery. Photo via cwgc.org

SANGRO RIVER WAR CEMETERY

Il Cimitero Militare di Torino di Sangro is located on a beautiful hill overlooking the south bank of the Sangro River, a thick forest of holm oaks and hills dotted with olive groves and vineyards. There are 2,617 soldiers buried here, and memorials to more than 500 soldiers who were cremated in accordance with their religious beliefs. All of them fell in the battle of the Sangro on 27-29 November, 1943; also here are those who lost their lives in the following months in the battles fought on the Adriatic front and even a number of escaped prisoners of war who died while trying to reach the Allied lines.

The cemetery is also often called the English Cemetery, because most of the boys resting here were of British origin. There are, in fact, 1,775 men from the United Kingdom, along with many comrades from very distant lands: 355 New Zealanders, 229 men from Pakistan, 106 from India, and 74 from South Africa. Others were from Australia, Canada, Belgium, Poland, and many unknown.

At the cemetery, there are information panels explaining the history of the military campaign on the Italian front and a register with the names of the soldiers and the locations of their graves.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The cemetery is always open during the day. As suggested on the CWGC website, if the gate is closed, enter the code "1221" to open it. For directions, enter "Cimitero militare britannico di Torino di Sangro" or "Sangro River War Cemetery" in Google Maps. You can also get there by train and walk or bike the last stretch of the road. The nearest train station is Fossacesia - Torino di Sangro, seven kilometres from the cemetery. After crossing the Sangro River, turn right and take the signposted Sangro path – L3. Be warned: it is a steep climb!

WHAT TO SEE NEARBY

You can start your visit from the beautiful [Lecceta di Torino di Sangro Natural Reserve](#) nearby (Contrada Saletti, SP 119, Km 1, Torino di Sangro), a wild oak forest with easy trails where, with luck, you can encounter roe

deer, colourful European bee-eater birds, and wild tortoise. From the Visitor Center, take the L2 path, climb the hill to admire the vistas of the sea and the spectacular San Giovanni in Venere Abbey. From there, it is a 40-minute walk to the cemetery.

THE MORO RIVER WAR CEMETERY

The Moro River War cemetery is also known as the Canadian Cemetery, the largest in Italy, as most of the soldiers killed during the Moro River and Ortona battles and buried here were from Canada.

Situated near the town of Ortona, the cemetery has spectacular views of the Majella Mountains, surrounding olive groves and a pine forest nearby. Every year, on November 11, the Canadian Poppy Day, a remembrance Mass is held in the Church of San Donato beside the cemetery.

There are information panels explaining the history of the battles and the register with the names of the soldiers and the locations of their graves. You can sit in the shade on benches to enjoy the peace and quiet.

Below: The view from the nature reserve near the Canadian War Cemetery. Right: The entrance to the cemetery.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The Cemetery is open every day. For directions, enter “Cimitero militare canadese di Ortona” or “Moro River Canadian Cemetery” in Google Maps.

WHAT TO SEE NEARBY

Visit the beautiful nature reserve, Punta dell'Acquabella, nearby. Facing the entrance of the cemetery, take the road cutting through the olive grove to your left (signposted as *strada senza uscita*). The path will take you to a fragrant pine forest, right above the sea. The path continues and will take you to the sea or, 100 metres heading north, to the Trabocchi Coast cycling path.



THE MUBA MUSEUM

If you want to learn more about the military campaigns in the area during the World War II, visit the Museum of the Battle (MUBA) in Ortona. It was founded by the city and is home to a collection of photos, documents, and relics from the bloody battle of 1943. The museum has three main parts: the Hall of Civilians, commemorating the 1,314 civilians killed in the battle; the Hall of Combatants, with a display of war objects such as uniforms, weapons, military rations, all donated by veterans and civilians or founded in the surrounding countryside; and the Propaganda Room, where visitors can see newspapers of the time, posters, and war paintings.

In one of the rooms, you can see a letter written in 1947 by a Canadian woman, the mother of Norman, a soldier killed at the Moro River. It is addressed to the mayor: "I am asking a very precious favor of you if you can find some or one of your women who will visit my son's grave personally and write to me. I will always be grateful to you and them...May God bless all you people who remember all our boys who lay in your land."

At the end of the tour, a projector plays a documentary in English and French telling about the history of the battles in Ortona and Torino di Sangro.

The museum is temporarily closed due to current restrictions, but virtual tours can be organised (in French only at the moment, but the museum is hoping to run tours in English as well). Contact the museum via its [Facebook page](#) or email to t.viola@comuneortona.ch.it. For further information [see here](#).

Michela Portacci works in the regional government and is passionate about promoting Abruzzo and its traditions.



Wartime photos from the Museum of the Battle in Ortona

LA PRESENTOSA: A TALE OF LOVE AND COMMITMENT

By Linda Dini Jenkins

From the first mention by Gabriele D’Annunzio in 1894, to the intricate work of contemporary artisans, La Presentosa remains a vibrant symbol of Abruzzo’s romantic traditions and delicate craftsmanship.



Two presentose from the 1800s displayed in the Museo del Costume d’Isernia. Photo from the booklet "La Presentosa"

When I came to Sulmona in 2010, I noticed two things right away as I walked down the *corso*: the unavoidable displays of colorful and very tempting *confetti* – and the unusual, stunning intricate necklaces in jewellery shop windows. I quickly came to learn that these were *presentose*, the traditional star-shaped filigree baubles all wrapped up in tales of love and commitment.

HISTORY

While the tradition of *presentose* goes back at least to the 17th or 18th century, it wasn’t until 1894, when the Abruzzese writer Gabrielle D’Annunzio mentioned them in his masterwork, *The Triumph of Death (Il trionfo della morte)*, that they were

made famous. He writes, “Two heavy gold rings hung from her ears and on her breast lay the *Presentosa*: a large filigree star with two hearts in the middle . . . The precious metal, bought with the constant effort of many generations, kept for years and years in profound safety, only brought out for every new wedding day. . . .”

The *presentosa* is a truly Abruzzesse treasure. It is believed that *presentose* were once only known in Molise (once a part of Abruzzo) and in the Frentana and Peligna areas of Abruzzo. While some kind of “one-strand openwork” was widespread, it was only the goldsmith workshops of Sulmona and Pescocostanzo which originally produced the two-stranded version. Other cities – Agnone and Guardiagrele – are cited as being among the oldest centers of this kind of work, while other production centers included L’Aquila and Scanno.

To me, the most striking thing about the *presentosa* – apart from its long and storied history – is its remarkable filigree work, whether the piece be the traditional metal pendant or the more contemporary “*tombolo*” version, using exquisitely worked lace instead of metal. When artisans talk about filigree, what they mean is the technique of working fine strands of gold or silver, braided or twisted, into the desired shape. Originally, the technique called for hammering the twisted strands of metal flat to create a cross-section resembling rows of ears of corn. However they are fashioned now, they make a beautiful statement for necklaces, earrings, and brooches and uses far less gold (or silver) than if they were solid pieces. As a result, the workmanship simply shines!

If you've seen *presentose*, you've probably noticed the wide variety and sizes that they come in: metals of silver, yellow gold, rose gold, and now even lace filigree in place of metal. But more than that, you'll see necklaces and other pieces bearing a single heart, two hearts, and entwined hearts, sometimes with a moon. Symbols of eternal love. Ahh, how romantic!

Left: A folkloristic group wearing presentose, 1923.
Right: A wedding collar, 19th century. Photos from the booklet "La Presentosa"



SYMBOLS

The conventional wisdom goes like this: one heart is said to symbolise the unmarried woman, or a piece that a mother gives to her daughter. Two hearts suggest that the wearer is engaged, and that the piece was a gift presented from her intended. Two hearts entwined or joined by a half moon suggest that the woman is married, and that the partners are linked to each other.

Adriana Gandolfi, an anthropologist and author of the booklet, *La Presentosa*, says that all these theories are unfounded. “The *Presentosa* was produced in a wide range of styles. Back then, goldsmiths didn't put their brand on the pieces, so they did their best to set themselves and their creations apart from others developing unique styles easily attributable to the maker,” explains Gandolfi. “Many *presentose* were fashioned in accordance with customer's wishes: hearts dripping blood or shedding tears of Passion; hearts surmounted by flames or locked together with a key. In my book, there is a photo of a *presentosa* with a sailboat, which, most likely, a man gave to his betrothed before leaving on a long journey overseas.”

The name “*presentosa*” derives from the word “*presenténze*” – the engagement announcement. A man would gift a *presentosa* to a young woman he intended to marry. “Like all traditional jewellery, the *presentosa* had a clearly defined function: it communicated that the woman was engaged,” explains Adriana Gandolfi.

PEOPLE’S JEWELLERY

It turns out that wedding contracts from the early 19th century, drawn up by the notary Domenicantonio Aloè from Guardiagrele, mention two *presentose*: one with coral and another studded with rubies, most likely, both belonging to well-off families. Small, plain designs cost little and even a man of small means could afford one. Generally made of low carat gold (8 and 12 carats) for economic reasons and, using the filigree technique (which allows for considerable savings on raw material costs), the monetary value clearly isn’t the most important aspect of the *presentose*. “Rich families commissioned bigger, more elaborate *presentose* decorated with precious stones and inserted in intricate multi-strand wedding necklaces. Often, these wedding collars (called *la corona del petto* –

Modern day *tombolo* lace *presentose* from Scanno by Oreficeria Di Rienzo



A modern day *presentosa* from Scanno by Oreficeria Di Rienzo

the chest crown) had three-to-four *presentose*, added by one generation after another,” says Gandolfi.

NEXT GENERATION

Today’s goldsmiths are hard at work creating new twists (pun intended) on *La Presentosa*. *L’Amorino* from Scanno is an intricate design of cupids and crowns, often offset by stones on the points. *La Pescarina* from Pescara was created in 2000 as a new tradition, inspired by creatures of the sea, especially the starfish. The *Sgarbizio* represents Castel di Sangro. *La Pulsatilla* was inspired by a flower from Roccaraso, and many jewellers continue making *Il Cuore D’Abruzzo*, an ancient symbol, carried by shepherds in the 1700s, which often held a lock of their beloved’s hair.

You can buy the booklet *La Presentosa: A jewel from the Abruzzi that embraces tradition and innovation* by directly from the author (email at adrianagandolfi2014@libero.it).

Linda Dini Jenkins leads small tours to Italy and blogs about travel at [Travel Italy The Write Way](http://TravelItalyTheWriteWay.com).

A COLOURFUL CARNIVAL RITE FROM CASTIGLIONE MESSER MARINO

By Anna Lebedeva

It is not just in Venice that locals dress up this time of year. Carnival in Abruzzo is celebrated with parades, colourful floats, and traditional costumes.



Castiglione Messer Marino. Photo by cristian19811/Instagram

HISTORIC VALUE

In Abruzzo, with its agricultural and pastoral traditions, carnival celebrations were always part of the transition from the old year to the new one. In the old days, Carnival in Abruzzo meant the awakening after the cold rigid winter and, according to popular beliefs, the dead ancestors and underground spirits were the guardians of the land's fertility who helped seeds' germination. The weeks from the winter solstice to the feast of Sant Antonio in January to Fat Tuesday was filled with rituals, many of which have been forgotten these days, but some are still celebrated.

"The Carnival in Abruzzo was a celebration of great complexity and historic value," says Professor Francesco Stoppa of Centro Antropologico Territoriale Abruzzese per il Turismo, Università G. D'Annunzio di Chieti-Pescara. "This patrimony has unjustifiably been diluted by modern consumerism. Once very common, nowadays, the ancient carnivalesque rituals can only be found in a few small areas of the Chieti Province. Our carnival celebrations were as spectacular as many other, better-known celebrations, but it has always been more engaging because

of its songs and choral tradition, which meant everyone was a participant.”

For many centuries, the town of Castiglione Messer Marino in the Chieti province has been keeping the little-known custom of the *Maschera castiglionesese* alive. It is a performance that takes place along the streets of this small town. Men dressed up as *Pulcinella Abruzzese* (*i Pulgenèlle*, in local dialect) announce the start of the *Maschera* marching around the town, singing and playing traditional instruments. Locals treat the procession participants and spectators to wine, panini sandwiches, and biscuits as they walk around the town.

THE COSTUME

The most striking feature of the *Pulcinella Abruzzese* is its elaborate high headgear decorated with bright colourful pompoms and ribbons. It symbolises the connection between earth and heaven, religious power and the warding off of evil. The *Pulcinella Abruzzese* costume has other symbolic accessories: a magic wand that brings natural order and makes whatever it touches burst into flowers, the boots (a symbol of power, as peasants could barely afford even simple shoes), bells to keep evil spirits at bay and to symbolise fertility.

Head attire of the Pulgenèlle. Photo by pulgenella_castiglionesi/Instagram



The Pulgenèlle. Photo by pulgenella_castiglionesi/Instagram

Anthropologists say that the character of *Pulcinella* goes many centuries back and had always represented the deceased ancestors. In the town nearby, Schiavi D’Abruzzo, a similar tradition exists: local men dress as *Marraroun* (or *Marraroni*) with high conic hats. However, anthropologists say it is difficult to say which of the two started first or whether they were influenced by another long-lost ritual.

Although there are some similarities with the Neapolitan *commedia dell’arte* character *Pulcinella*, the Abruzzese one is connected to the archaic Carnival figures typical for the Central Apennines and has more ancient origins and symbolism.

Recently, the town of Castiglione Messer Marino asked UNESCO to recognise the *Pulcinella Abruzzese* as an intangible cultural heritage.

In [this video](#) you can see a procession of Pulcinelle Abruzzese. Turn the sound up to listen to the tinkling of the beautiful bells attached to the costumes.

A DAY IN CASTEL DEL MONTE

By Mauro Cironi

The medieval town of Castel del Monte boasts spectacular views of the Gran Sasso mountains, rich history, ancient traditions, and hearty cuisine. In fact, there is so much to see, you might want to stay more than just one day.



Castel Del Monte. Chiesa di San Marco Evangelista

In the heart of the Gran Sasso mountain range stands the medieval village of Castel del Monte. Due to its strategic position, it played an important role in the so-called Land of the Barony, which included such villages as Santo Stefano di Sessanio, Calascio, Castelvechio Calvisio, Carapelle, and Barisciano. Located only a few kilometers from the famous plateau of Campo Imperatore, in the view line of the magnificent castle of Rocca di Calascio and

an easy drive from the city of L'Aquila, it is becoming a popular destination among both Italian and foreign tourists.

The origins of Castel del Monte can be traced back to the 11th century, when the population of the ancient Roman settlement on the plains below moved to the less accessible mountain top, fleeing frequent attacks by barbarians. Here they built the Ricetto neighbourhood, the oldest part of the village. The first historic document with a mention of the fortified *Castellum de Monte* dates back to the year 1223.

WHAT TO SEE

FORTIFIED HOUSES AND ARCHWAYS

Unlike many other medieval towns, Castel del Monte didn't have defensive walls. Instead, *case mura*, or fortified houses, built around its perimeter, formed the defensive structure. To create more space, archways (*sporti*) were constructed with living spaces above them. Five heavy wooden gates reinforced with metal and chains protected access to the village. The sacristan of the San Marco Church (*Chiesa Matrice di San Marco*) opened the gates at dawn, after the Angelus, and closed them in the evening. Head to the top of the village to see the *case mura* and walk under the medieval arches.

MUSEO DELLE TRADIZIONI

The ethnographic museum is scattered across the historic part of the village in five sections: The Old House (*La Casa Antica*) which shows how a rich local family used to live in the past; the Art of Wool (*L'Arte della Lana*) tells a story of the thriving trade in the Medici era when the wool from the town was sold across Europe; The Oven of the Dance (*Il Forno del Ballo*) is where local women used to bring their bread to bake;

Over the centuries, the village changed hands from one powerful ruling family to another, who left distinctive marks on its architecture: the Counts of Acquaviva, the Sforza, the Piccolomini, the Medici, and the Bourbons. Their grand abodes still stand, flanked by the humble dwellings of shepherds and farmers who shaped this harsh and isolated territory's traditions.

For such a small place, home to fewer than 500 people, Castel del Monte packs a punch: there are things to see and do for nature lovers, foodies, history, and art buffs. A day trip here can include a leisurely walk in the part of the village under the ancient *sporti* (arches); a tour in the Museum of Traditions; sampling *pecorino canestrato di Castel del Monte* – a traditional unpasteurised sheep milk cheese made by local shepherds; and sipping craft beer made with local ingredients, while admiring incredible vistas over the surrounding mountains.

The village is famous for its typical ancient dishes such as *pecora alla chianese* (sheep meat cooked slowly in large cauldrons, the way shepherds did it for many centuries), *calcioni* (rustic egg and cheese buns), and cured meats made from a rare Abruzzese heritage black pig. If you are into hiking, follow one of the many mountain trails around the village, suitable for everyone, from beginners to experts, from families to seasoned mountaineers.

The archways of Castel Del Monte





Old houses in Castel Del Monte

Sheep Farming (*La Pastorizia*) and Work in the Fields (*Lavoro nei Campi*).

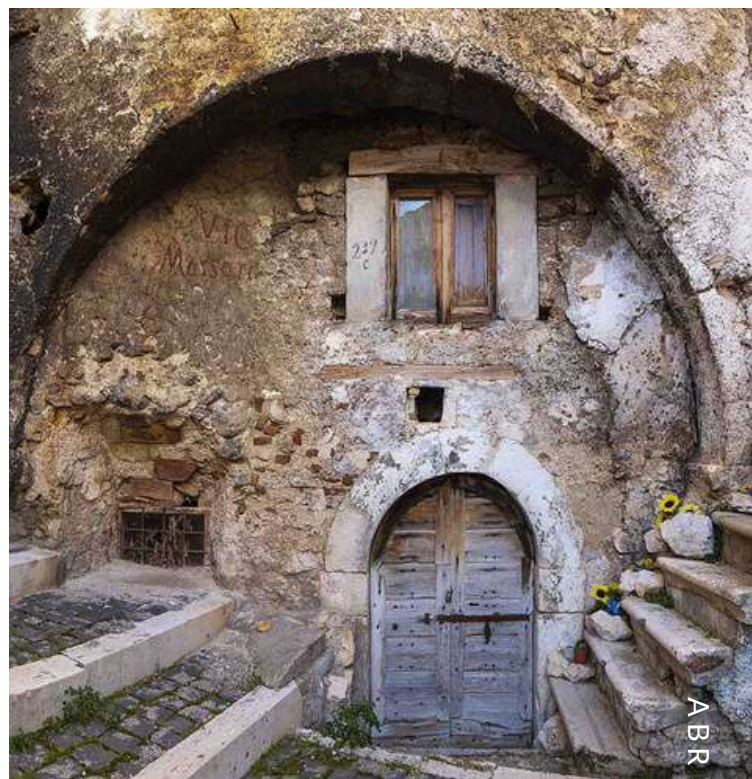
Address: Via del Codacchio, 401. To book a guided tour of the museum (in Italian) call 0039 3407299369.

CHIESA DI SAN MARCO EVANGELISTA

This is the main (and oldest) church in the town. Inside you will see magnificent Renaissance and Baroque stone altars commissioned by local rich families, a baptismal font with the coat of arms of the Medici, and a richly decorated wooden pulpit. If the door is locked, call the town hall to enquire about opening hours (tel.: 0039 086 2938137).

CHIESA DELLA MADONNA DEL SUFFRAGIO

The church is one of the most notable jewels of the Baroque period. Behind the modest façade, you will find beautiful frescoes, a gilded 16th century organ, and an opulent altar.



The church had strong links with the rhythms of transhumance: services were held on July 2 to greet shepherds and their flocks on their return and on September 8 to bless their departure for the pastures in Apulia. The tradition is still kept alive with a celebratory procession from the centre of the village to the church every year on September 8.

Address: Via S. Maria, 341, Castel del Monte. Call the town hall to enquire about opening hours (tel.: 0039 086 2938137).

FESTIVALS

CELLARI APERTI, JULY

For one weekend in mid-July, ancient stone houses and cellars open their doors to visitors to see what life used to be like in the town in the old days. You can listen to folk music, taste traditional dishes, and watch artisans at work.

For more information and dates, see the event's [Facebook page](#).

RASSEGNA DEGLI OVINI, AUGUST 5

For over 60 years, the sheep festival in the plains of Campo Imperatore has been one of the biggest annual events in Abruzzo. The festival attracts thousands of visitors and includes sales and exchange of livestock, a sheep show, farmers' market where local producers sell their best cheese, cured meats and other local specialties, prize draws, and music.

For details of the programme, check the town hall's [Facebook page](#) at the beginning of August.

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NOTTE DELLE STREGHE, AUGUST 16-18

During the Nights of the Witches, the town turns into an open-air theatre with actors and locals enacting old rituals, legends, beliefs, and superstitions. One of the main events is the rite of Seven Arches (*Sette Sporti*) when young mothers walked under seven arches as part of a jinx removal spell when they believed the evil eye was cast on their newborns.

WHERE TO EAT

DAL GATTONE

Simple hearty dishes: ravioli with ricotta, pasta with chickpeas and aubergine, excellent grilled lamb. Try a local speciality – the *marcetto* – a spreadable strong sheep milk cheese made with a little help from milk fly larvae (removed before consumption!).

Address: Rione Campo della Fiera, 9, Castel del Monte. Tel.: 0039 3387286553.

OSTERIA DEL LUPO

A simple eatery with an excellent wine list (70 labels from Abruzzo and across Italy) to go with local cheese and cured meats, traditional *arrosticini* meat skewers, simple pasta dishes, and pizza made in a wood oven.

Address: Viale della Vittoria 34, Castel del Monte. Tel.: 0039 086 2938136.

LA LOCANDA DELLE STREGHE

A cosy witch-themed restaurant serving hearty local dishes. Excellent pasta and chickpea soup with saffron. Try the rich *Il Cappello della Strega* bake (mozzarella, bread and mushrooms baked in a ramekin).

Address: Via della Pineta, 24, Castel del Monte. Tel.: 0039 086 2938911.

Mauro Cironi is a mountain guide and an amateur photographer based in Abruzzo.

All photos © Mauro Cironi.

GOING SOLO

By Kerry Roy

Setting up a new business alone in a foreign country — knowing only a few words of Italian — is not something everyone has the courage to take on. But the author jumped into the deep end and never looked back.

When my partner and I bought our new home in 2017, we planned to set up house and start a business in Abruzzo together. After viewing 23 properties all around the region, we chose an *agriturismo*/horse riding school with 10 acres of land, 17 stable rooms, a spectacular olive grove with 400 trees, a restaurant, and a two-bedroom apartment with magnificent views of the Gran Sasso Mountains. It was exactly what we had in mind for creating our glamping retreat.

We moved here in May 2017 and, after a busy summer hosting friends and family, I and my partner of 16 years decided to go our separate ways. He went back to the UK, and I — crazy, stupid or brave — made the decision to stay in Abruzzo and continue with the grand idea of a glamping retreat, facing whatever challenges there were ahead, solo. And, wow, what a journey it has been!

“WHERE ARE YOUR PARENTS?”

I am not a novice in the world of business. Having created and managed a successful glamping site back in the UK for nine years, I learned a thing or two. I always aspired to do something similar abroad, somewhere



Kerry Roy

where the sun shines for longer than the odd day, somewhere to access outdoor the adventures that my soul craved, and somewhere I could enjoy both summer and winter sports. When I learnt about Abruzzo in a TV programme, it seemed to tick all the boxes.

With decent business experience behind me, but zero Italian language skills, and knowing only two people (the estate agent who I bought the property from and her after-sales guy), I decided the only way to survive and make my project a success was to throw myself into the deep end. So I did!

Within a few months, I met some wonderful people who I now call my expat friends and adopted family. Every time I was introduced to some of the locals, they seemed intrigued and baffled by my plans and asked where my parents were. I took that as a compliment,



One of the domes at Kerry's glamping site

that I must look far too young to be setting up home and business as a single female in Italy.

CHALLENGES

If there is one thing I am most grateful for on this journey, it is the wonderful, kind, hospitable, welcoming people I have met, who have been a huge part in making it all happen. Italian *nonne* wanted to cook and feed me, the local plumber often does small repairs for free, the construction engineer went out of his way to help me fill out necessary paperwork because I was struggling, and neighbours helped me to find workers to harvest olives. They expected nothing in return, and I found it so heart-warming.

That's not to say that it has been a smooth ride. Having bought a property that was a registered hospitality business did make some of the bureaucratic procedures and planning applications a little easier. The construction side of things took much longer than anticipated and often felt like I was in some sort of comic sketch trying to commu-

nicate with the builders, architect, and engineer who all spoke little or zero English and clearly thought I knew nothing. I had to use the old, trusted Google Translate and hand gestures like in a game of charades.

At the end, they didn't do it the way I wanted and I later had to change a few things, which cost me more time and money. But the most difficult moments were when I had to deal with all the legal documents. I could not read or understand most of them (the language of Italian legal documents is a world apart from spoken Italian). Even Google Translate did not help! I just hoped that I was not signing my house over to someone. It was very scary and, in the future, I will definitely pay a translator to handle things like that.

There were many moments when I just held my head in my hands and thought, "What the hell am I doing?! I must be crazy for putting my life in the hands of complete strangers!" It was hard. At some point I cried quietly, every day, mainly due to sheer frustration and worry. A few times I wanted to throw in the towel and call it quits, but those thoughts passed quickly. In my heart, I knew that I'd regret it later if I gave up.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

In Spring 2020, I opened Cerchio Del Desiderio Glamping Retreat – just 4km from the local towns of Pianella and Loreto Aprutino – a year later than planned, due to delays from the Italian side and manufacturers. We are the first dome (tents shaped as domes) glamping facility in Central-Southern Italy and the response has been amazing. I often receive messages from locals all around Abruzzo thanking me for bringing this unique experience to the region.

You might think 2020 was the wrong year to open a hospitality business, but it's only partially true. Due to the travel restrictions, we lost pretty much all of our foreign guest bookings overnight but doubled bookings from Italian tourists, including a lot of Abruzzo locals.

So, despite the difficult situation worldwide in 2020, it was a success for my new-born business.

Running a business here has taught me never to expect it to be the same as running a business in the UK. Everything is different here: the marketing, enquiries, communication with guests. The hardest part for me was having to take most bookings via the phone because Italians just love to talk and rarely use email. So imagine me, answering the phone with my minimal Italian! But I only had three people hang up on me because, I guess, they couldn't understand me. The first few weeks of check-ins, I had an A4 sheet of paper with a script hidden under the reception desk. I would quickly read it to memorise before the guests arrived and, if I forgot my script, I pretended to fiddle with the printer to buy myself extra time to re-read the script. Phew! I have since joined an Italian class at an adult learning college and hired my Italian teacher to do the reception.



Kerry in her Ape

FUTURE PLANS

I don't let language difficulties and bureaucratic obstacles derail me. There are so many things I want to do: the current situation inspired an idea for dining with socially distanced bell tents overlooking the mountains and star-gazing campfire dinners. I recently invested in a new Italian toy, a little turquoise three-wheeled Ape that will be used to deliver aperitif picnics to the dining tents. It also comes in handy for my little trips to the local vineyard, zooming down the country roads through the olive groves and grape vines. You can't feel more Italian than that!

We have two donkeys arriving from a sanctuary to live here and accompany our guests on walks. There are some amazing opportunities on the table at the moment and potential expansion in Italy. I have too much passion and determination bubbling inside me. Abruzzo inspires me!

RESTORING A NOBLE PALACE: THE GARDEN

By Bimbi Bellhouse

Turning an overgrown jungle into an elegant classical garden will take two years and a lot of patience. We continue following the challenging project of turning a crumbling noble palace in a hilltop town of Casoli into a luxury residence.

When we bought Palazzo Ricci, the garden was a surreal jungle, with brambles as high as the four towering pines behind the house. It was impossible to struggle through the thick undergrowth without a machete, and the vegetation was encroaching on the very house itself. A climbing wisteria entangled the drainpipes and gutters across the rear façade, and a fig tree clung onto the top floor balcony. There was ivy on every wall and buddleia, too, creating a haven for dancing colourful butterflies. The outlines of the original garden were barely discernible, with only here and there a glimpse of stone balustrading through the undergrowth.

This sad state of affairs was the result of a gradual process which started with the premature death of Baron Mose Ricci in 1952. The family subsequently moved out, only visiting occasionally, and the garden – although at that point still planted up and cared for – deteriorated over the years.

From the very beginning, in 1799, the area behind the house was described as an *orto*, or vegetable garden. The well at the centre was used for watering the vegetable beds,



The overgrown garden in the old palazzo

for the house, and for the laundry. There would have been no formal garden of any kind, but rather rows of cherry, apricot, persimmon, apple, pear, pomegranate, almond trees, grape vines, and medicinal plants. Acanthus was traditionally used to treat burns, and calla lilies were used as a dressing to treat wounds, rheumatism, and gout. The flowers of the lime trees by the



An old photo of Casoli. Palazzo Ricci is one row below the castle on top of the town

cottage made soothing infusions to treat fevers and calm the nerves. Every plant had its use in this 19th century 'medicinal' garden.

The gardeners would have laid out most of the ground into separate areas for growing vegetables and flowers, with climbing frames for runner beans and tomatoes. Chickens and cockerels scratched and clucked around the *orto*, providing eggs and meat, and pigs were kept in a sty at the bottom of the garden to be turned into *cif e' cial* (Abruzzese chitterlings) on the Feast of the Epiphany, as well as all the *salumi* and air-dried sausages hanging in the Palazzo larders.

This 19th century vegetable garden remained unchanged for a century until the Baron was

formally ennobled in 1910. He celebrated this fact by adding the imposing stone double staircase to the rear of the house, with similar stone balustrading on the newly landscaped terracing below. Even though a large part of the garden remained given over to vegetable production and farmyard animals, a more formal garden was also introduced, although at no time did it follow the rigid lines of a traditional 'Noble Garden.' There was a large lawn at the bottom of the stairs, and the flower beds were planted in a decorative manner. This garden model remained until the 1960s.

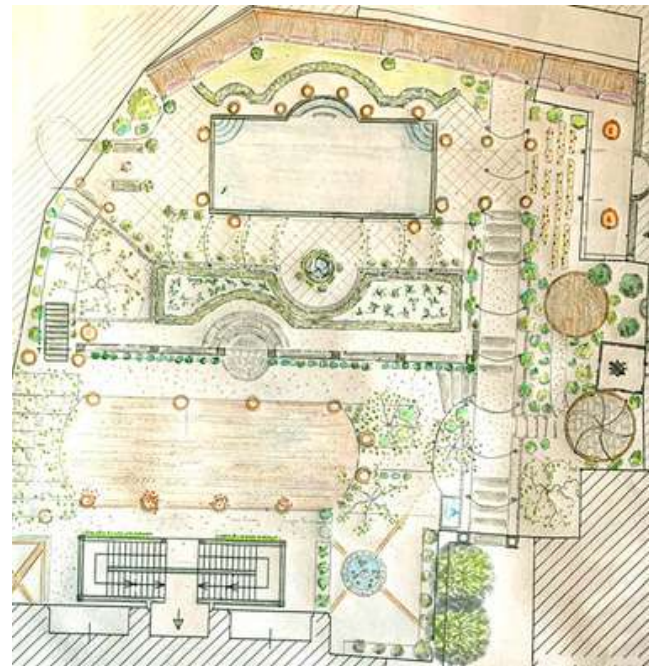
I recently chatted with the daughter of the last caretaker. "The large lawn behind the house was used to lay out all the large sheets and tablecloths to dry after being laundered at the well. In the garden there were various pine trees, also fruit trees,"



A rendered image of the new garden design

she recalled. “The garden wasn’t of a formal design, but various types of trees, shrubs and flowers were casually planted here and there. *Fiori d’Angelo* (Angel Flowers) both green and white, and then next to the fountain on the external wall there were lilies. I remember many snowdrops and also marguerites, both gold and crimson. There was also a small vegetable garden at the bottom to the right.”

Looking to the future now, and with a blank canvas to work on, we are so pleased to have the collaboration of one of Italy’s best known garden designers, Richard Shelbourne, who has lived in Umbria for over 30 years. His innately elegant classical style will transform our garden into a glorious setting for all the owners and their guests. It will incorporate walling, terracing, secluded seating areas, pergolas, gazebos, water features, and fire pits. The plants will be traditional, scented, and in



A sketch of the garden design by Richard Shelbourne

wonderful colours and textures. The large swimming pool will be surrounded by terracing, box hedges, and cascading blooms. The works will take around two years, but as the Palazzo starts to echo with the sound of voices and laughter, the garden will be ready to receive its first guests after more than half a century of abandoned silence.

<https://palazzoricci.club/>

PASTA E CECI – CENTURIES OF COMFORT AND SIMPLICITY

By Anna Swann

A humble soup of pasta and chickpeas (*pasta e ceci*) was a staple dish in rural households of South and Central Italy for centuries. Apparently, the Roman poet Horace knew *pasta e ceci* and mentioned it in his epic work *Satire* in the distant year 35 BCE, and the dish is still cooked today in Abruzzo, Lazio, Campania, Puglia, and Basilicata.

Each region has its own version of the recipe (e.g., in Lazio, it is cooked with anchovies) and it is often served as a pasta dish on a plate, without the cooking water. In Abruzzo, *pasta e ceci* always means a simple quick soup. Very few other things are as comforting as slurping this hot concoction of pasta and legumes served with a few generous spoonfuls of grated pecorino cheese on a cold winter day. Add lashings of *piccante* (oil infused with chili pepper) and you come as close to feeling Abruzzese as you can without actually being from here!

In Abruzzo, homemade *sagne* or *tajarelli* are traditionally used for *pasta e ceci*. It is a flat short shaped pasta (think short *fettuccine*, just slightly more narrow and thicker) made with flour and water only. In the old days, pasta with eggs was reserved for Sundays or special occasions.

Most traditional restaurants in Abruzzo have *pasta e ceci* on the menu, yet very few foreign visitors have tried the dish. There is also a variation of it, *pasta e fagioli*, made with beans, which is equally delicious. As with many other traditional dishes, little local twists are inevitable: someone adds tomatoes, others throw a few chestnuts in or enriches the soup with pancetta. Over the years, I've eaten innumerable bowls of *pasta e ceci* in many restaurants in Abruzzo and have a few favourites which I want to share with you.

TRATTORIA LA TAVERNETTA

Their *sagne e ceci* is legendary! Homemade pasta in the soup is perfect, thick, and chewy. As a special touch, they add a few dry-fried pieces of pasta for an extra crunch.

Address: Via Papa Giovanni XXIII, 2, Chieti. Tel.: 0039 087 1346242.

ZÌ CAMILLO

A rural no-frills trattoria loved by those who care more about hearty food and generous portions than clean tables and shiny glassware. *Pasta e ceci* here is stripped to its bare minimum and is brought to the table in large steel serving bowls. Simple but tasty.

Address: Via Passo Lanciano, 49, Lettomanoppello. Tel.: 0039 085 8570780.

LA LOCANDA SUL LAGO

Due to its location just outside the touristy town of Santo Stefano di Sessanio, the restaurant can get crowded in summer. But don't be put off, their *sagne e ceci* with saffron from Navelli is excellent (the portion could be a tad bigger though). Sometimes, they serve a *gnocchetti* with bean soup, which is also very good.

Address: Via del Lago, Santo Stefano di Sessanio. Tel.: 0039 3423634322.

RISTORANTE CARMINE

Their *sagnarelle e ceci alla Carmine* is a more sophisticated version of the traditional soup, with seafood.

Address: Contrada Remartello 1, Loreto Aprutino. Tel.: 0039 085 8208553

THE CARNIVAL CAKE – CICERCHIATA ABRUZZESE

By Mary Vischetti

February is the month when the carnival was celebrated in the old days. Very few towns and villages in Abruzzo still celebrate *il carnevale*, but fried desserts are still eaten in large quantities this time of year. And I love that tradition. The *cicerchiata Abruzzese di carnevale* is one of my favourites. It is easy to prepare but, like many other traditional dishes, requires some patience. The simple dough is rolled into tiny balls and fried. After that the balls are dipped in honey and assembled into a donut-shaped ring.

It is called *cicerchiata* because the balls resemble *cicerchie*, a type of legume, similar to chickpeas, that were a staple in the past. *Cicerchiata* is a popular dessert in Central and Southern Italy, with small variations depending on the region. But in Abruzzo it is always made in February, during the carnival period, and seems to have originated in the area around the Sangro River in the Chieti Province.

INGREDIENTS

Makes 8 portions

To make the dough balls:

225 g wheat flour
2 eggs
2 tbsp sugar
2 tbsp sunflower or olive oil
1 tbsp aniseed liqueur
A pinch of salt
Some oil for frying (e.g., sunflower or peanut)

To make the syrup:

100 g honey
50 g sugar
Zest of 1/2 lemon and 1/2 orange
Coloured sugar sprinkles for decorating



PREPARATION

Mix the flour, sugar, and salt in a bowl. Add the eggs, oil, and aniseed liqueur and beat them with a fork into the flour. Take the dough out of the bowl and knead it on a working surface until it is compact but soft. Cover the dough and let it rest for about 20 minutes.

Make small thin cords with the dough. Cut them into pieces, roughly 1-2 cm long, and roll them into small balls, one by one. Sprinkle the balls with flour and heat up the frying oil. When the oil is hot, fry the balls a few at a time, until lightly browned. Put them to dry on absorbent paper.

To prepare the syrup, heat the honey, sugar, and citrus peel together over medium-low heat, until frothy. Put the balls in the syrup. Cook for five minutes, stirring constantly. Place the syrup-coated dough balls on a piece of parchment paper. Wet your hands with water and assemble the cake in a donut-shaped ring. Decorate with sprinkles.

Mary Vischetti lives in Abruzzo and writes a food blog [Un'Americana Tra gli Orsi](#).

LIVE COOKING CLASS

Join Mary for a live demonstration to learn how to make *cicerchiata* on our [Facebook page](#) on February 11 at 5pm CEST.



LITTLE GEMS FROM TOLLO

By Anna Swann

The *Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita* (DOCG), or controlled and guaranteed designation of origin, is the highest designation given for Italian wines. There are two DOCG areas in the region of Abruzzo. Tullum is the most recent to be awarded the prestigious title, in 2019. Located around the town of Tollo, in the Province of Chieti, it is one of the smallest DOCG areas in Italy. Only three wineries with 18 hectares of land (with a potential of growing to 300 hectares) producing around 130,000 bottles are included in Tullum DOCG, and only 20% of their wine is sold outside of Italy.

Tollo has a long history of wine production. Ancient terracotta vessels for storing wine have been found in the area, and ruins of a spectacular Roman villa near the town is considered by historians to be the first ever big, organised farm that specialised in viticulture.

The DOCG designation means strict production guidelines: only a certain number of vines per hectare is allowed, yields must be lower, and the wines must be aged in barrels longer. For example, red Tullum DOCG wines labelled *Rosso Riserva* must be at least 95% Montepulciano D'Abruzzo grapes, a minimum 13.5% alcohol, and aged for a minimum of two years (beginning on January 1 of the year following harvest) which must include at least six months in wood barrels.

Five types of wine are produced within Tullum: red, red *riserva*, Pecorino, Passerina, and Spumante. Strict regulations and lower yields mean the prices for bottles with a DOCG label are higher. Is it worth paying extra? It depends. If you want to enjoy a pizza and a quick bowl of pasta with a glass of vino then splashing out, perhaps, doesn't make much sense. I enjoy drinking more serious, DOCG wines on special occasions with a more intimate atmosphere. Montepulciano D'Abruzzo with a DOCG seal tends to be denser, richer, more complex – what producers here tend to call “a meditation wine.” As for white wines, once you try a Tullum DOCG Pecorino or Passerina you might not want to settle for anything less after that.



Here a few of my favourite wines to help you get acquainted with the Tullum DOCG.

ROSSO RISERVA TULLUM DOCG 2016 – FEUDO ANTICO

Montepulciano D'Abruzzo 100%, old vines. Aged in French oak barrels for 12 months. Beautiful notes of blueberry, prunes, and sweet spices, rich and tannic. Still too young to reveal its true depth.

Buy: directly from the [winery](#), or [Diemmevini.com](#)

Price: €27-€35

PECORINO TULLUM DOCG 2019 – FEUDO ANTICO

100% Pecorino grape. Fragrant yet delicate, with notes of peach, apricot, and a hint of citrus. Can age beautifully for a few more years.

Buy: directly from the [winery](#), or [Diemmevini.com](#)

Price: €14

TULLUM ROSSO DOCG 2017– VIGNETI RADICA

Montepulciano D'Abruzzo 100%. Aged 24 months in wooden barrels. Elegant notes of red fruit, tobacco, and toasted hazelnuts, with a hint of cinnamon.

Buy: directly from the [winery](#).

Price: €20