



Centerbe (Itinerary 2)

In the early nineteenth century, a keen herbalist selected a large number of aromatic herbs from the Abruzzo mountain slopes. The liqueur he obtained was a striking emerald green colour and was very alcoholic (over 70%), with an intense aroma of herbs. Even today, these herbs are taken fresh to the distillery where they are left to dry out and are trimmed until only the tender leaves remain. This is an ancient recipe and is jealously guarded by the only family producing the special liqueur in its original recipe, at Tocco da Casauria, home of this extraordinary beverage.



Ceppe (Itinerary 3)

"Ceppe" is Civitella del Tronto's "flagship" recipe and undoubtedly one of the tastiest homemade pastas in Abruzzo. The classic water, egg and flour dough is left to rest in an oiled bowl for about half an hour. The dough is then divided into small pieces of the same size, which are then rolled out into 15cm-lengths and wrapped round a thin knitting needle to obtain hollow pasta. An hour and a half of skilled pasta-making is needed for just one kilogram of pasta. Ceppe are served with a typical ragout of mixed meats and sprinkled with lovely pecorino. While we wait, we should make sure we visit Civitella's magnificent Fortezza Borbonica, reached along the "ruetta", Italy's narrowest street.



Confetti di Sulmona (Itinerary 4)

A tradition that dates back to the end of the fifteenth century. The typical sugared almond is composed of a whole shelled, peeled almond, coated with deposit of sugar built up by a series of dippings to achieve crystalline layering without using starch. The core can also be other ingredients: hazelnut, cinnamon, chocolate, various candied fruits, pistachio, dried fruit. The evolution of machinery, the types of processing and the history of comfit-making in Sulmona can all be explored at the museum in the Pelino factory, always open to the public (see the "To be visited" section). The artistic arrangement of the comfits is a source of pride: we find bunches like grapes, ears like wheat, rosaries and baskets, combining shapes and colours with extraordinary age-old skill and creativity.

Info: <http://hl.ath.cx/muvi/sistema/museopelino/>



Fegato dolce and Fegato "pazzo" (Itinerary 4)

A liver sausage very popular all over Abruzzo, comprising a mixture of pluck including varying amounts (from 50% upwards) of liver, heart and lung. Belly and lean pork are added in various percentages, as mentioned previously, depending on the area. The



mixture is minced finely and seasoned with salt, pepper, chilli pepper (for the "pazzo" version); sometimes crushed garlic and bay leaf are also added. The mild version, mainly from the Aquila area), has the hot spices replaced by honey, in amounts that are governed by experience and by the consistency and/or leanness of the stuffing. The sausage is best eaten around March-April, after it has dried and aged.

Guanciale amatriciano (*Itinerary 4*)

This is lard with streaks of lean meat made from pork jowl trimmed into the classic triangular shape. The processing takes at least three months and consists in salting, pepper coating, smoking and curing the meat. The flavour is intense and a hint of spice to enhance the smoking. Guanciale, like other pork-derived products, is closely linked to its territory of production as it has always been an integral part of the transhumant shepherd's diet, being easy to store and carry, as well as being very nutritious. This is the key ingredient for spaghetti all'amatriciana.

Lenticchia di Santo Stefano di Sessanio (*Itinerary 4*)

Small, round lentils that are really tasty. This tiny dark pulse is just a few millimetres in diameter and grows – quite heroically – at an altitude of 1,200-1,600 metres, in the Gran Sasso-Monti della Laga National Park. Because of the small size, it does not require soaking, just a quick check to make sure there is no grit and a good rinse under running water. Cook by covering with a small amount of water, adding a couple of garlic cloves, bay leaves and extra virgin olive oil. Simmer raw in a covered pot for about twenty minutes. The lentils are served with a few slices of toasted bread, drizzled with more extra virgin olive oil. The Santo Stefano di Sessanio lentil is a Slow Food Presidium.

Liquirizia – liquorice (*itinerario 3*)

For centuries, herbalists used the juice of these roots that abound in this area; the pharmaceutical industry used it for its





intense sweetening properties, about 50-100 times stronger than sucrose. Without forgetting the simple, timeless pleasure of liquorice wheels, sticks, fish, comfits, sweets, well all that selection of delicious treats that are the joy of young and old. We should not leave impressive Atri, with its splendid cathedral, Roman theatre, Palazzo Ducale, caves and badlands, without buying some real liquorice.

Maccheroni alla chitarra

The region's quintessential pasta, made by laying firm, pliable dough across the special traditional implement (a rectangular wooden frame, crossed lengthwise with wires like a guitar) and gently pressing down with a rolling pin, always in the same direction. The square-section "spaghetti" drop from under the "chitarra". They are excellent with lamb ragout (preferably without tomatoes, just with mountain herbs), with mushroom or truffle dressing, or with seafood or a very simple tomato and basil sauce. Patience and some dexterity is required, but a "spaghetti alla chitarra" first course will never be lacking on a typical Abruzzo menu.

'Mazzarelle teramane' (Itinerary 3)

A small masterpiece of great Teramo cuisine. Large lettuce leaves are needed, with lamb gut pluck, onion, marjoram, parsley, garlic (possibly fresh), extra virgin olive oil, wine vinegar, salt and pepper. Chop the lamb pluck, wash well, lightly salt and leave to dry. Spread small amounts of lamb pluck onto each lettuce leaf, adding a few onion slices, garlic and parsley. Tightly wrap the leaves around the filling, then tie up each mazzarella with gut that has been carefully washed with water and vinegar. The parcels are cooked in suitable frying pan or baked in the oven at medium temperature, frequently turning and moistening, if necessary, with more water and vinegar. Serve hot as a delicious starter or main course.

Montepulciano d'Abruzzo

Abruzzo's quintessential grape and wine. The region's first DOC label and since 1968 has proved the quality of this land's sovereign grape, safeguarding and certifying wines produced (as well as bottled and aged) in the dedicated areas of the four provinces, from slopes overlooking the 130kms of coast as far as the high inland hills whose vineyards are planted at 500-600m of altitude. Montepulciano, the territory's flagship, is eloquently identified by its strong quality imprint (the deep vibrant colour derives from the natural abundance of precious polyphenols that guarantee a solid evolutionary capacity; aromas dense with a typical cherry nuances which refine and age into a varied, complex bouquet). Though its distinct character is guaranteed by the cultivar, Montepulciano offers a multifaceted range of nuances, from the smooth creaminess of the sunnier richer areas to the silky elegance of the highlands. Nonetheless, its trademark is its juicy satisfying progression. A quest for terroir specificity has achieved enhancement of subzones, like the recent newcomers of Casauria, Terre dei Vestini, Alto Tirino.

Montepulciano d'Abruzzo cerasuolo

Cerasuolo is the other face (and other colour) of Montepulciano, afforded the same DOC protection with specific regulations. This is a traditional rosé made from the same grape but applying a much shorter and more delicate must and skin contact. The wine was originally for home consumption (ready to drink sooner than red) but now the "third pillar" of Abruzzo wine for obvious socioeconomic reasons. It is pleasant and when successful the aromas are a delight, offering a "bridging" wine that will complement both fragrant land-based recipes and savoury seafood cuisine. Today, thanks also to the commitment of its rigorous, canny producers and to the undisputed increase in the culture and technical skills of the wineries, Cerasuolo has reached the apex of accomplishment in its history.



Montonico (*Itineraries 2 and 6*)

We would go so far as to say that Montonico white wine expresses the image so long linked with the people of Abruzzo. The grape skins are tough (an advantage for winemaking, protecting from mildew and disease, as well as ensuring interesting results if handled correctly) and as a consequence this endurance took it on rough journeys abroad, for consumption as a dessert grape. It grows in stony soil and cool climates. It ripens late and therefore requires courage (to challenge the weather) from the grower. But the payback is a special wine: good acidity, crisp tart finish with delicate fruit and spice on the way. For the time being, only Montonico is the joy of just two areas in the province of Teramo: Bisenti and Poggio delle Rose. Courageous pioneers here began the revival but the impact is still limited as only small quantities are produced, while keen "scouts" and connoisseurs are already expressing justifiable interest.

Mozzarelle & C.

Whatever the shape and size – plaited, small or tiny balls, knots – "fior di latte" as cow's-milk mozzarella is called, is the freshest, most popular of all spun curd cheeses: a real Abruzzo treat. In the mountains and foothill areas, livestock farming has always been the most important agricultural activity and mozzarella is produced in areas prized for quality of pasture (affecting milk quality) and for artisanal cheese-making tradition. Mozzarella

from L'Aquila and areas bordering on the Molise region, beginning at Rivisondoli, are particularly popular. "Scamorza appassita" (a dried version, often served with cured ham) is processed in the same way as fior di latte, but with a lower percentage of water; as it is left to dry, the rind is a characteristic yellowish colour. They are tied in pairs with a distinctive cord and are more intense in flavour, often slowly barbecued or oven-baked.

Miele – honey

A strict protocol must be applied by producers who make PDO "Miele d'Abruzzo". In practice, the hives and all processing, packaging and sale, must take place on regional territory. There are other rules to follow, guaranteeing the product's genuineness and typicity; there is also a somewhat limited list of the types of honey accepted for the designation: polyfloral and polyfloral mountain type (the latter from hives at over 800m in altitude); sulla; sunflower; savory; acacia; honeydew and sainfoin (the latter a real Abruzzo rarity). Eight types of honey in all, but with a wide range of flavour and aromas, each linked to type and also to territory and producer.

Mortadelle di Campotosto (*Itinerary 4*)

This "mortadella" is made at Campotosto and its Mascioni and Poggio Cancelli districts, on the shores of Europe's biggest





artificial lake, in the heart of Gran Sasso-Monti della Laga National Park; a Slow Food Presidium guarantees quality and authenticity. First of all, ability is required in choosing the fat for the "lardello" or finger of lard that is inserted at the centre and is the main feature of this lean pork charcuterie, oval in shape and the size decided by the maker. The mortadella is tied in pairs (hence the popular "mule's balls" nickname), then hung to dry and smoked for a short time. Some say three months is enough for them to be edible, but after a year they are supreme and thanks to the lardello they do not dry out.

Moscato di Castiglione a Casauria (*Itinerary 7*)

In the upper Pescara valley, in the "Castiglione a Casauria estate" – an inland hill area at 350m in altitude, – the local moscato grape has been grown and used for winemaking for hundreds of years. It is one of the oldest native Abruzzo vines used for making delicious dessert (for meditation, as they would say today) wine. Most of the small-scale production is for home consumption at family celebrations (births, weddings) or during public festivities like the patron saint's feast on February 3 and, in more recent times, the local food festival. It is an extremely pleasant, balanced, naturally sweet wine. A trip to Castiglione a Casauria to sample it could be accompanied by a stop at nearby Torre dei Passeri for a visit to the splendid San Clemente a Casauria abbey.

Mosto cotto (*Itineraries 1 and 3*)

Must syrup was prepared by country folk at the birth of a male child, later to be offered on his wedding day. Technically, this is a montepulciano d'Abruzzo grape must that is boiled in a copper cauldron to make a syrup. When fresher, unfermented must is added to the syrup, this restarts fermentation and produces a more "drinkable" version, called "vino cotto", which is used as a dessert wine. True must syrup is made by leaving fresh must to simmer over a medium flame until it reduces from one third up to one eighth of its initial volume, depending on the taste or application required. It is used in the preparation of traditional pastries, for preserves and as a condiment in many meat-based dishes.

Olio extravergine d'oliva (*Itineraries 6-8-9*)

Mediterranean olive culture has one of its most important Italian expressions here in Abruzzo, where entire landscapes have been carved out over the centuries between sea and mountain. Abruzzo olive cultivation has an ancient history, proved by the recent recovery of a huge olive tree of the venerable age of 1,700 or so years, in the vegetable garden of San Giovanni in Venere abbey at Fossacesia, in the province of Chieti. Abruzzo boasts more than 50,000 hectares of olive groves which, together with the vineyards, paint the truest picture of this hill territory. The province of Pescara, mainly in the area known as





the "golden triangle" of Loreto Aprutino, Pianella, Moscufo and in Val Pescara, has the Aprutino-Pescarese PDO designation, the first to be awarded in Europe in 1996. The province of Chieti, where approximately 65% of regional production is concentrated, has the Colline Teatine PDO designation with the Frentana and Vastese subzones. Latest born is the Pretuziano Colline Teramane PDO with its local tortiglione and castiglionesse cultivars, farmed along the coastal hills, reaching approximately 25-30km inland almost to the Gran Sasso foothills.

Parrozzo (Itinerary 2)

There are many patisserie specialities, but worthy of note is the "parrozzo", a modern version of the ancient "pane rozzo" (coarse bread) prepared by Abruzzo country folk using cornmeal. Confectioner Luigi D'Amico's skills and the inspiration of Gabriele D'Annunzio (who invented the name) created this delicious cake, where the yellow of the corn is reproduced by adding eggs to the cake mix; the dark-coloured crust that comes from baking in a wood-burning oven is evoked by a dark chocolate coating; the flour used is made from choice almonds and has an inimitable bittersweet taste.

Pasta: abruzzo quality in the world

An obvious brainteaser would be deciding who was the first to dry out a mixture of ground wheat and water so that it could be preserved and transported. Abruzzo dried pasta, starting from the "cradle" in Fara San Martino, at the foot of Mount Majella, is a worldwide quality and distribution leader. The water, the air,

traditional skills, bronze dies, with slow, low-temperature drying, the processing, the control of the raw materials (above all, top quality wheat semolina) ... these are the simple secrets of Abruzzo pasta. Apart from well-known brands, excellent products made by small and medium semi-artisanal businesses can be purchased in Abruzzo shops and are often found gracing gourmet tables or in top restaurants the world over.

"Pallotte cace e ove" (Itineraries 1 and 3)

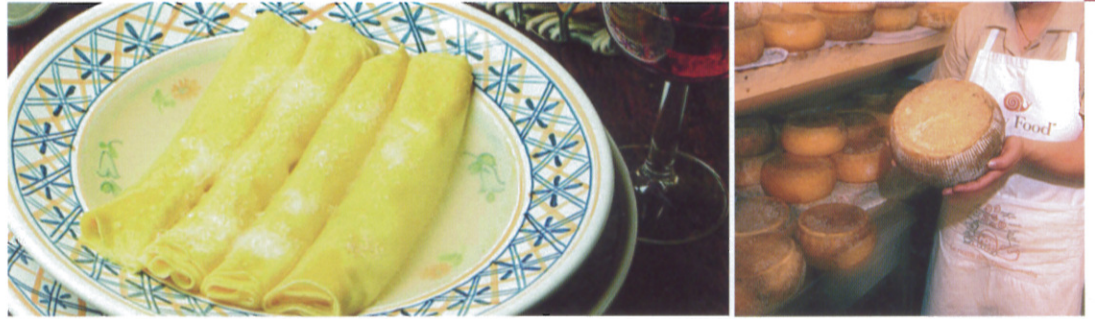
These cheese and egg balls are a delicious traditional rustic dish. They are made by mixing crumbled bread and fresh pecorino, roughly grated, into beaten eggs. The recipe suggests 6-7 eggs for every 500g of cheese, seasoned with finely chopped parsley.

The balls are fried in extra virgin olive oil (or quality peanut oil) at a medium temperature. In the meantime, a light tomato sauce is prepared from a little onion stewed in a large frying pan and tomatoes (fresh when in season, or bottled), cooked for ten minutes. Then the fried balls are placed in the sauce where they are left to cook for ten more minutes.

Pecorino (Wine)

One of the many members of the prolific trebbiano family. For quite a while it was part of the ampelographic jumble (vines mixed into various cultivars, related and unrelated, coexisting on the same plot) that characterized rural viticulture in the "belly" of Italy, taking root mainly in the Tronto area, overlapping both on the Marches and Abruzzo hillsides. It was precisely in Abruzzo





that its traits (average acidity but good structure; aromas more of fruit like ripe apple and banana, than blossom, and interesting nuances of spice) made it one of the most appealing of recent revivals. There has been grafting in dedicated vineyards, with committed nurturing in the reborn (and rampant) Tirino winemaking zones, as well as on the Adriatic coastal hills. Pecorino is rapidly earning itself a place in the sun, and is one of the region's most successful wines.

Pecorino (cheese) (Itinerary 2)

Every small producer has their own method and secrets, including the use and preparation of the rennet, all handed down through the family. Many areas are dedicated to this particular product, with names that are a trademark in the true sense, assuring a natural, genuine, delicious cheese: Atri, Scanno, Pizzoli. A separate mention must be made of Farindola pecorino, a

cheese produced at Farindola and other neighbouring municipalities from milk given by ewes raised on Gran Sasso's eastern slope. The milk is processed raw to make 1-2kg cheeses, using a specific type of rennet: obtained from pig stomachs. During ripening, the cheeses are turned, massaged (traditionally by women) and bathed with extra virgin olive oil and vinegar to prevent mould and over-drying. This is a Slow Food Presidium. <http://www.pecorinodifarindola.it/>

Scrippelle 'mbusse (Itinerary 3)

Teramo's most iconic recipe expresses both charm and history in its fine pasta circle that links refined Medici cuisine exported to Paris and reimported as a French dish to Teramo, where the courtly traits were combined with rich flavours of rustic and mountain origin. The evolution of the name traces this journey: "scrippella"-"crespella"-"crêpe". The recipe suggests gently





binding two level tablespoons of flour per beaten egg, adding water and salt to taste. A thin layer of this batter is cooked delicately on both sides in a 20-25cm pan, traditionally greased with lard. The pliable golden "scrippelle" are left to rest while a classic broth of turkey wing, muscle, beef and herbs finishes cooking. The "scrippelle" are then filled with grated cheese, spiced with cinnamon and rolled, before being placed in bowls where they are served covered with hot broth and topped with more cheese, as preferred.

Sise de monache (*Itinerary 1*)

The sponge cakes for which Guardiagrele is famous are shaped into three peaks and filled with confectioner's custard, then dusted (as if it were snow) with finely-sieved icing sugar. This is the culinary description of the cake linked to the Palmerio family and another patisserie, owned by the Lullo family, who are the "heirs of Filippo Palmerio", according to their shop sign. The most intriguing, fascinating aspect is the originality, history, seduction and associations the cake evokes: maternal and childlike, mischievously erotic, ritualistic and symbolic, pagan and religious at the same time. How are they eaten? The true, stylish *sisa* enthusiast bites it without hesitation, as a child would, powdering nose, lips and chin with sugar that must then be licked with delight from the lips and "moustache": a return to the innocence of childhood.

Scapece (*Itinerary 1*)

A historic recipe for the preservation of fish so it could be sent to mountain areas or for storage when long periods of scarcity were forecast. Spanish in origin, "escabece" is now only made by the few remaining craftsmen, in Vasto. It comprises skate and smooth dogfish, fried, dried and left to cool; vinegar, white wine

