

Buon Giorno del Ringraziamento a tutti! (Happy Thanksgiving!)

Member News & Web Links

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L'Osservatore Lancastriano

Member News, November 2020



Condolences to the Salerno Family on the passing of Anna "Maria" Salerno. Maria was born in Puccianiello-Caserta, Italy on November 29, 1923 to the late Aniello and Maria Michela (Sacco) Fusco and was the widow of Alexander "Sandy" John Salerno who passed away in 2000.

Maria met and married the love of her life, Sandy, during World War II while Sandy was serving in the United States Army stationed in Italy. Maria would visit the camp and did sewing and ironing for the soldiers. A wonderful relationship developed and they married at St. Nicholas Catholic Church in Santa Barbara, Italy on August 30, 1945. Maria came to the United States in 1946 and became a United States Citizen in 1948. She was so proud when her husband, who was a barber, purchased the then Gene and Jack Barber shop on N. Duke Street across from the Lancaster County Courthouse in 1966.

Maria was a long time LICS member, and attended many of our meetings, picnics and events. We will miss seeing her and her charming smile.

All Souls' Day Traditions and Delicacies by Marion Caroselli



All Saints Day (La Festa di Ogni Santi) is a national holiday in Italy as well as being a holy day throughout all of Catholicism. The following day, All Soul's Day (Giorno dei Morti,) is equally important in many parts of Italy. It is a time when families bring flowers to the cemetery where generations of ancestors are buried. The traditional choice is brightly colored chrysanthemums.

In southern Italy, excited children run to the graves of their nonni (grandparents) to thank them for the little gifts they left for them all around the house that morning. Typical treats include **Frutti di Martorana** (a fruit made from almond paste) and **Crozzi 'i Mottu** (bones of the dead). They may also find **Pepatelli** Biscuits (full to the brim with toasted

almonds) as well as **Taralli Ring Cakes** (covered in icing sugar). Other likely specialties include S-shaped **Nucatoli** Biscuits and White and Brown **Tetu**. Many celebrating the festival will also cook a traditional breakfast of **Muffoletta**, a round loaf served hot, drizzled with olive oil, salt, pepper, oregano, anchovies in oil and a few slices of primosale cheese. Another important aspect of Festa dei Morti is the addition of **Pupi ri Zuccaru**, Sugar Puppets.

All over the country, Italians set an empty place at the table for people who no longer sit there. For many people the graveside vigil is an occasion to thank their ancestors, a celebration of their lives and a chance for adults and children alike to chat to them as if they were still here.

Why not try your hand at making some traditional foods during this time of year. There are regional differences and a Google search will turn up several versions of the recipes. Items like chestnut flour can readily be purchased on line. You can also google substitutes for some ingredients. In bocca al lupo! (Good luck)

Let's start with the traditional All Saints' Day bread, Castagnaccio, and go onto All Souls' Day treats.

For links to the Recipes, please click on the recipe names below:

[Castagnaccio](#)

[Frutta Martorana](#)

[Crozzi 'i Mottu /Ossa di morto](#)

[Pane dei Santi \(All Saints Bread\)](#)

[Pepatelli](#)

[Taralli ring cakes](#)

[Nucatoli](#)

[Tetu cookies](#)

[Sicilian Muffuletta](#)

[Stinchetti dei Morti](#)

[Gnocchi-di-zucca-e-funghi](#)

[Pupi ri Zuccaru: Sugar Puppets](#)

[Schiaccia dei Santi \(or schiacciata, meaning focaccia\)](#)

[Timballo di zucca](#)

[Castagnaccio](#)

[Fave dei morti \(beans of the dead\)](#)

[Ossa dei morti \(bones of the dead\)](#)

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Roasted Chestnuts

Castagne (Cast-AH-nyeh) have been cultivated for over 2000 years and were imported into Italy and the rest of the European continent from the Near East and Turkey. Ancient Greek writers, Dioscorides and Galen, wrote about the chestnut's health benefits while warning of the flatulence caused by overindulging. Early Christians thought chestnuts symbolized chastity. Communities in mountainous and forested areas of Italy relied on chestnuts as their main source of carbohydrates, and in some regions, a cake made of chestnuts is used as a substitute for potatoes.

The European Chestnut can grow to 60 feet tall, or can be quite bushy. There have been reports in history of some trees reaching 50 feet in circumference around the trunk. But, just as with the huge,

ancient 2000 year old olive trees we see in Puglia, some trees love Italy so much and seem to live forever.

Il Castagno dei Cento Cavalli (Chestnut of 100 Horses) on the eastern slope of Mount Etna in Sicily is the oldest known chestnut tree in the world, estimated to be between 2000-4000 years old! The tree's name comes from a legend about The Queen of Aragon and her army of one hundred knights being able to take shelter under the massive tree during a severe storm. In the 1700s its then intact trunk measured almost 200 feet around. Today, the tree's trunk is split into several different sections, but all are growing from the same roots and are still alive.

The Mugello area in northern Tuscany is no doubt the heart of chestnut cultivation in Italy. In fact the Mugello Sweet Chestnut has been given Protected Geographic Indication status by the European Union. It is sweeter than others, peels easily and supposedly tastes of vanilla, hazelnut and the scent of fresh bread.

Although you can eat chestnuts raw, the flavor can be a bit astringent. The best way to enjoy them is roasting, although they can also be candied, boiled, steamed or deep-fried. For roasting, the outside of the fruit needs to be scored (yes, chestnuts are actually fruits) to prevent them from exploding. The texture is something like a dry baked potato with a sweet, nutty flavor. The flavor can be enhanced by tossing in sugar or a cinnamon-sugar mix. Some even toss them in a bit of melted butter.

Chestnuts are used in many different ways: milled into flour for bread (long lasting!), cakes, pastas or polenta; to thicken soups and sauces; to make fritelli (fritters); candied or pureed and sweetened for desserts or as spreads; as an element of stuffing for turkey or goose; as a substitute for potatoes in stews; Tuscan chestnut cake; and as a dessert in Montebianco Italy.

The chestnuts in Europe--especially in Italy--are superior to the ones we typically find in American supermarkets. If you can, find someone who carries imported Italian Sweet Chestnuts. If not, there is always Amazon. Otherwise, here is a method of roasting chestnuts that won't dry them out while adding a bit more flavor:

- Preheat your oven to 425F
- Cut the Xs in the chestnuts (use a very sharp knife, but be careful) on the rounded side.
- Using a large stock pot, fill with enough water to cover the amount of chestnuts you are going to roast, and then add 1/3 cup sugar, 3 tablespoons salt and 4 dashes of nutmeg.
- Add your chestnuts to the pot and bring to a boil. Shut the heat off after coming to a boil and remove from the heat and let sit another 5-10 minutes.
- Drain the chestnuts and lay them out onto some paper towels or a cotton kitchen towel. Pat them dry.
- Next, put them in a large bakers/half sheet pan (not a dark pan). Arrange them so their cut sides are facing up.
- Sprinkle some sugar and cinnamon or coarse salt on them before baking (or both).
- Roast for a 30 minutes in the middle of the oven. If it looks like they are browning too fast after the first 15 minutes or so, you can lay a foil sheet loosely over the top.
- The flesh should look golden brown when done and the skin should be curling open.

Of course, chestnuts need to be eaten right away, as soon as you can touch them without burning your fingers. (Ouch). Peel. Eat. Sip some Amaretto. Enjoy!

End Note:



Dear Members,

October 7th was “Clipper Stadium Italian Movie Night,” which took the place of our Annual Summer Picnic. 30 LICS members were there and got to enjoy Italian food, drinks, bocce on the ball field, and the classic Italian-American movie, *The Big Night*, shown on the scoreboard screen just like a drive-in movie. There was a basket raffle fund-raiser, and a gift card prize for the winner of the Most Outstanding Mask Contest, too. I won the mask contest with my “many mustaches” mask! It was a great, fun evening and reminded me of life before Covid-19.

Saluti, Rudy DeLaurentis