

Food and identity

Alessandra Guigoni

Food of Religious Feasts as Marker of Identity in Sardinia

In Sardinia the festive season is marked by the preparation and ritual consumption of certain dishes.

In particular, during the events related to the so-called "cycle of saints" of the Catholic calendar, some breads, pasta and desserts of complex workmanship, requiring several days of preparation, which are handed down from generation to generation are prepared and consumed. There is no feast of the saints without a certain appropriate and combined food; this food - often "blessed" and distributed - has frequently deep roots in a remote, pre-Christian past, origins that emerge in certain apotropaic and auspicious forms, particular ingredients, such as almonds, even in the very names of some food. Sweet *pistiddu* on the day of Sant'Antonio (January 17), ornate bread (*cogone*) on the day of San Marco (April 25) and castles of *croccante* (*gatou*) for the feast of San Giovanni (June 24) in Quartu Sant'Elena are some examples.

These foods are dedicated and often symbolically offered to local saints. In fact, food artifacts mark social times and spaces and maintain a cohesive local cultural identity through these practices of collective preparation and consumption.

These artifacts linked to the cycle of the saints appear in indirect relationship with the cultural past of the island, with thousands of cyclopean towers (*nuraghi*), menhirs, rock-cut tombs, sacred wells, statues of heroes, all part of a prehistoric cultural heritage, candidates or already UNESCO heritage; foods are among the remnants of this civilization, frayed by time, which today is expressed through the sacred festive food.

Elisabetta Bernardi

Elite athlete's food identikit

Skipping breakfast, chronic dehydration, not understanding the Glycemic Index of carbohydrates, lack of variety in the diet especially a lack of fruit, vegetables and oily fish, poor pre and post-competition meal, too much protein and over reliance on supplements and believing popular media. These are the most common Nutritional Mistakes made by elite athletes. Even if there is no miracle food or diet that turns a mediocre athlete into a champion, it is certain, that inadequate diets may not allow athletes to give their best. On the basis of my experience with the America's Cup (AC) Sailing Team "Mascalzone Latino", to improve elite athletes' diet, some procedures should be adopted, such as: increasing of the carbohydrate intake to meet the macronutrients needs of very active athletes; embracing a typical Mediterranean Diet, rich in complex carbohydrates (such as pasta, cereals, legumes, fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts and seeds), therefore high protein and fat food servings need to be reduced; ensuring the right amount of dietary fibre and micronutrients; recommending the consumption of sea-food for its high content in zinc, copper and polyunsaturated fatty acid; encouraging to drink the right amount of fluids. To persuade the AC sailors to follow the proposed recommendations and the new diet, a specific nutritional education program had to be included.

Cecilia Winterhalter

Celebrity food and Celebrity

Studies the favourite dishes of celebrities (rulers, monarchs, famous people). The tale of the presumed alimentary preferences shows how food is used as identity classifier and how its symbolical qualities define celebrity's identities and the concept of celebrity.

Identity construction is supported by one's alimentary preferences and is tightly linked to one's (external/internal) representation. We are told that Queen Victoria had a predilection for curry, that Pope Francis as excellent cook prepares outstanding stuffed squid, that Charlemagne's favourite food were roasts, that during pregnancy Kate Middleton battled her severe food aversion due to morning sickness, that Putin drinks raw quail eggs and that Justin Timberlake favourably eats lobster pasta in Italy.

If taste is not only the capacity to detect flavours, but also to judge what is good/beautiful, alimentary preferences, food's quantity or luxuriousness express one's character, status and distinguishing traits. Kennedy is told to have been a small eater, which had to be reminded of meals. A collective memory on bread or cake defines our image of Marie Antoinette, even if she never said "let them eat cake". Quantities of luxurious foods declare position and power, whilst frugal meals affirm virtuous characters, popularity and closeness to "common" people. The dishes preferred (or believed to be preferred) by this famous *élite*, reveal the symbolical meanings and mythization of aliments. This "mythical" food, distinguishing celebrity eaters and changing identities, habits and desires, also reveals food to take part in the construction of an imaginary collective celebrity concept.