

Schianca, Enrico Carnevale. *La Cucina Medievale: Lessico, Storia, Preparazioni. Biblioteca Dell' "Archivum Romanicum" 386.* Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2011. Pp. 755. 49 EUR. ISBN 9788822260734. . .

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The formal study of medieval cuisine has grown in interest and activity over the last forty years; a good deal of leadership in this discipline has come out of Italy, following the lead of Massimo Montanari, his students and colleagues. To these scholars we must add the name of Enrico Carnevale Schianca, who, though formally trained in law, has devoted himself over the last thirty years to the study of medieval cuisine in Italy. I hesitate to say "medieval Italian cuisine" because Carnevale Schianca himself suggests that there is more than one cuisine represented by the extant documents from Italy.

The subtitle of *La cucina medievale* tells the reader what to expect in format; the volume is, in essence, an Italian dictionary, an alphabetical listing of every term, ingredient, or relevant material found in culinary sources from the Italian peninsula. Carnevale Schianca lists twenty-three primary sources, all representing food and drink in Italy from before 1492, the date of Columbus' first voyage to the New World. The author describes his work as having the structure of a glossary--there are 2500 keywords, pulled from more than 7000 recipes, of which close to half are also included in the volume, arranged so that they can be compared one to the other. The title is, however, somewhat misleading, as the volume covers Italy and only Italy; other medieval traditions are evoked only when they shed light on the Italian case.

In the brief introduction, Carnevale Schianca argues convincingly that cuisine is an art, parallel to those of painting or music (vi-vii); this art has evolved, just as painting has evolved from the works of Giotto. He suggests that our understanding of Shakespeare's plays has parallels with our understanding of medieval cooking--we cannot experience these things as did the first audience of Shakespeare, but that reality does not mean we cannot appreciate the plays (and the cuisine that accompanied them) today.

The author offers an "Avvertenze per la Consultazione" in which he lays out the presentation of each entry: the word itself, grammatical annotations as appropriate, a brief list of medieval sources, sometimes with specific citations (page or folio number), definitions. When a word carries more than one definition, these are noted with Arabic numerals. More complete entries also have spelling and morphological variants, citations, etymologies when the entry is significant, scientific notes and literary attestations, followed by cross-references when relevant. Carnevale Schianca offers his rules for transcriptions (*u* and *v* follow current usage; *j* and *y* are maintained; *ç* is transcribed as *z* only at the beginning of a word. Arabic words offer their own set of difficulties, particularly as the author has used a variety of sources in different languages--the transcription of Arabic follows Carnevale Schianca's source, so that an Arabic *geem* (ج) is transcribed either as "dj" (from French sources), "j" or "g" (from English sources), "y" (from Spanish sources). This quirk should not cause major difficulties for readers.

The entries in *La cucina medievale* range from "aaneth," a preparation related to *soffriti* to "zuppa maritata," a kind of broth in which a sandwich-like object, made of bread, eggs, cheese, perhaps also of meat, soaks up the liquid, as do, somewhat, modern croutons. When the source itself is unclear, as is the case with "zuppa maritata," found in a manuscript in the Wellcome Institute, London, Carnevale Schianca does his best to explain. In this case, the recipe is in a part of the manuscript described as incomprehensible; folios 97v-99v are referenced (727).

Entries can also be for raw ingredients, in which case the information provided may include a history of that foodstuff in Western Europe. The entry on cherries, for example, "cerasa" begins by listing all the primary sources that use this ingredient (five spell the word *cerasa*; another eight medieval sources use a different orthography). Carnevale Schianca then relates the history of the fruit, supposedly brought to ancient Rome from the region of the Black Sea circa 64 BC, though he immediately refutes this Plinian myth, suggesting that perhaps it was one particular breed of cherries that the Roman Lucius Licinius Lucullus brought home. The author then discusses different varieties of cherries known in medieval Italy, based on contemporary sources. Next we learn at what point in the meal cherries might have been consumed (at the beginning of the meal, to stimulate the appetite, p. 153); in the kitchen, cherries are used both fresh and dried, in soups or in cakes. The article ends with a cross-reference to "visciola," a kind of cherry with its own mini-history and selected examples of use in recipes.

A foodstuff with a different medieval history is sugar, "zucchero," to which Carnevale Schianca devotes six full columns. On the history of sugar, Carnevale Schianca's primary source is Sidney Mintz (*Storia dello zucchero*, 1990, originally published as *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* [1985]), although the more recent work by Mohamed Ouerfelli (*Le Sucre: production, commercialisation et usages dans la Méditerranée médiévale* [2007]) might also have been useful. Readers learn of the difficulties of sugar production (the plant is finicky; it requires a good deal of manpower and water), the different

degrees of sugar refining and the names of the results, from "mucchera" (highly refined) to "candi" (clear, in large pieces) to "tabar zad" (highly refined pulverized sugar). For medieval merchants and cooks, the lighter the color, the higher the perceived quality of the sugar. Carnevale Schianca offers some idea of the cost of sugar: more than saffron, almost twice as expensive as pepper (723). As the author reminds us, "usare lo Zucchero come condimento è comunque un'occasione per fare bella figura" citing the unedited fifteenth-century *Buone e dilicate vivande* (London: British Library, Additional 18165; also preserved in Lugano: Fondation Bibliothèque internationale de Gastronomie, ms. 1089) as a source (723). He concludes with more than a few examples of this ingredient in dishes from the twelfth to the fifteenth century.

Cross-references from sugar lead to "Biancomangiare," "Colatione," "Confetto" "Gileb" "Manuschristi" and "Penidii." Following "gileb," (the only element of this list I did not immediately recognize) we find Carnevale Schianca's notes that allow the English speaker to relate the word to syrup and to julep (280). "Penidii," we learn, are a sugar confection made with water, honey and almond oil, a medication for coughs, respiratory inflammations, or sore throats--cough drops, in other words. "Manuschristi" are another pharmaceutical creation, the description of whose production suggests something close to a toffee or caramel candy.

Each entry offered its own mini-story and led this reader in new directions. After a long general article on sauces, the author describes in more detail thirty-six different sauces, along with cross-references to various "sapore" --from "Salsa alba," a white sauce, to "Salsa zipollina," served alongside meat dishes. Articles on the most rudimentary of ingredients (e.g. onions, turnips) were as interesting as those on medieval imports, such as sugar, discussed above.

As is the case with any dictionary, the reader needs to know how to spell the words in order to find them. Carnevale Schianca attempts to assist the reader by providing a "Repertorio" at the end, which allows the reader who knows only "ciliegia" to find "cerasa." The Repertorio also helps move the reader looking for a Latin term, such as *nux* to find the specific, "nocciuola" or "mandorla," in this case.

After the Repertorio comes several pages of advice for those who would like to create a medieval meal. What Carnevale Schianca offers are mostly suggestions: an order of the meal, starting with Antipasti, followed by Primi Piatti, Secondo Piatti, Farciture, Salse, Contorni, Dessert and Bevande, each with references to the entries in the volume that will give readers an idea of what to prepare and how. In some respects, this section can help a reader find entries that don't spring to mind. For example, under Antipasti is a listing of dishes made with eggs, so the reader can then pursue those items to learn of egg dishes and methods of preparations--this beyond the simple "Uova" entry, which has no cross-references.

One can always criticize. For example, I would have liked to find the specific names of cheeses used in medieval Italy. However, Carnevale Schianca is forced to rely on the materials available--cheese names are not often found in recipes, but rather in other sources, such as business documents or the remarkable *Summa lacticiniorum completa* by Pantaleone da Confienza (1477, ed. by Irma Naso, 1990). Some of the cheeses mentioned in the "Formaggio" article, however, do get their own entry: Bria (Brie), Buffalino, Candia, Casciata, Casocavallo, Comino, Giuncata, Guaimo, Luchardo, Marzollino, Moza, Parmesano, Piaxentino, Provatura, and Ravigiolo.

In conclusion, this is a remarkable work by an active participant in discussions of medieval food culture. Carnevale Schianca has collected a tremendous amount of material, organized it intelligently and made it available to the general Italian-reading public. The price is not unreasonable, in part because there are no illustrations. The volume will surely become an invaluable resource in all future discussions of medieval cuisine, in and outside of Italy.