

## At the table

A small frontier land, the province of Varese is immersed in the north, in the green of the Alps, with the mountains being the backdrop to lakes and hills, while south the beginning of the Po Valley gives life to a fertile and well cultivated area

A special shape of the territory that, in addition to offering unique views, is also reflected on the gastronomy and the typical products, including cheese, salami, wine and honey, still today crafted according to ancient traditions and offered in tasty recipes with rice, lake fish, game and **"polenta"**.

Do not miss the **"cassoeula"** (a mixture of pork meats with cabbage) and the **"brüscitt"** (beef and horsemeat).

Among the typical products, there is the **"formaggella del Luinese"**, a seasoned cheese, with half hard cheese paste, produced with whole and milk that is 100% goat. It is the first Italian cheese with these characteristics to have reached the "DOP" recognition in 2006: all its production chain must therefore only take place within the Montane Communities of the Province of Varese and some hilly villages, up to the natural limit of the Lake Varese.

Another delicacy, the **Salame Prealpino Varesino** - a typical seasoned raw salami - is made by farmers and small craftsmen working pork from Sempione, passing through Campo dei Fiori, Luino, Valcuvia to Val Veddasca.

The **Miele Varesino** Quality Consortium collects 36 honey producers and protects honey with extraordinary characteristics, even superior to those required by the rules: absolute genuineness, freshness, moisture content at minimum values to avoid degradation, fine and uniform crystallization, responsiveness to organoleptic analysis. All is guaranteed by glass packaging.

Taking up a historical tradition, **the wine-growing of the area** is interesting and is represented by the Vini Varesini Association since 2008: small and medium-sized companies that have resumed the cultivation and processing of merlot, nebbiolo, barbera, gamaret, croatina, chardonnay and malvasia grapes. A commitment that, in 2005, has obtained the IGT certification of "Vino dei Ronchi Varesini".

<http://varesedagustare.it>  
[www.vareselandoftourism.it](http://www.vareselandoftourism.it)

Some recipes:

### **Perch fillets at Borromea style**

Cut the fillets and fry them in white flour and whipped egg. Then sprinkle with grated bread and cook it in butter in a pan. Finally, put truffle blades on the fish.

### **Rice at Borromea style**

Cook the rice in salt water and drain it "al dente" (to the tooth: cooked until just firm) . In a frying pan, put butter, two sage leaves, a crushed garlic clove, and cooked ham cut into cubes. As soon as they are golden, pour the rice and let it jump a little in the fire. In the end, add "Fontina" cheese.

## **Typical food products**

The Varesotto (Varese area) is a land rich in gastronomic traditions and typical products. Some have become a niche product, others have been lost. Of the many species and varieties of fruit and vegetables that were produced here, by considering this land as the orchard of Milan, today we have only memory of the peaches of Monate and the chestnuts of Brinzio. And think



that at the Varese Exposition of 1886 Varese was awarded the silver medal for apples and pears by the Ponti Fruits School. Below is a brief list of the most well-known typical products: Among these – brand new - is the Saffron whose cultivation in the Varesotto has ancient roots, so that at the 1886 Varese Exhibition, Aeschylus Jemoli (Gemonio 1809-1889) was awarded prizes for his saffron.

In 2016 there was the first "industrial" harvest of saffron in Angera, after successfully experimenting with the new plant, by Le Sinergie farm, cultivating the dream to revive after 200 years, saffron, in the footsteps of the physicist Fr. Ajcardo Castiglioni from Angera, who in 1810 was the first to cultivate this plant in Lombardy.

**Formaggella del luinese (D.O.P.).** It is a semi-sweet cheese with a pleasant and sweet flavor, a delicate aroma that intensifies with seasoning, obtained using whole and raw goat's milk "Camosciata delle Alpi", "Saanen" and "Black Verzasca". The latter was chosen as a logo: a goat's head on a red background is in fact printed on the label that is attached to each cheese wheel. The seasoning is carried out in cells with controlled humidity and at a maximum temperature of 15 degrees or in cellars with natural moisture. The seasoning phase should be extended for at least 20 days.

Formaggella del luinese has long been the leading product of the farms of the MONTANE COMMUNITIES OF THE PROVINCE OF VARESE (the production area comprises about 70 villages)

**Furmagg de ségia (o Bicc).** Typical of Arcumeggia, which in every year in September dedicates a party.

The name comes from the wooden bowl where pieces of local goat's cheese are laid, covering each layer with pepper and spices. Add either cream or whey to milk or milk and cover with a wooden lid, smaller in size than "ségia" and let it ferment for at least 40 days.

The result is a soft, very tasty and spicy cheese, which can be eaten from September, just before the goat's dryness.

It is accompanied by polenta, pasta and rice, in addition to being tasted alone.

In the past, producing furmagg de ségia was a rite that signaled the end of the grazing season and a system for storing cheese for the winter.

**Frumagit of Curiglia** with Monteviasco. It is an oval and small-sized goat cheese.

The shape comes from the type of mold: the 'trumpet' or caròt, a funnel-expanded perforated metal tube at one end (where the 'curd' is loaded). The frumagit finished the bleeding was obtained by cutting with a knife, like salami slices, the dough that spilled out of the mold.

The reputation of the curbs of Curiglia and Monteviasco was such that in the past the women of Curiglia and Monteviasco had a 'posteggio'(place) assigned by the municipality in the market of Luino.

**Gorgonzola D.O.P.** Since 2001, the region of Varese has been included in the areas of production and seasoning of the cheese D.O.P. Gorgonzola. Gorgonzola di Varese is a cheese that is characterized by its soft, creamy appearance and typically mild, but especially for its particular taste and slightly spicy. It is produced with Latte Varese (milk from Varese) following very strict standards for production, milk collection and aging. To date,

the only producer of Gorgonzola in the area is the Agricultural Cooperative Latte Varese, which delivers the milk collected in the Varese Center to producers in Cameri, where they produce the Gorgonzola.

**Furmagina de Vares, Sancarlin, Toma** are all excellent fresh or seasoned products that, thanks to their exquisite craftsmanship, keep the various seasonal nuances linked to the different fodder and variety of pastures that feed animals throughout the year. Furmagina and Toma are produced with milk from Varese, by the Norden dairy in Osmate.

**Furmagina de Vares** It is obtained from the milk left to slowly acidify and by adding a small amount of rennet to favor its coagulation.

**Toma** La Toma is obtained from the freshly processed Varesotto milk handcrafted so that it has a product that can be stored for several months after production.

**Sancarlin or Zincarlin** It is cooked in the house leaving the "furmagina" for a few weeks to season.

**The Violino di capra** (goat's violin) In the mountains of Val Veddasca you can still prepare today the "goat's violin", a special ham obtained from the goat's or sheep's thighs raised almost in the wild. Traditionally it is sliced as a real violin, leaning it on the left shoulder and using the knife as a bow.

The "violin" is still hand-crafted; The pieces are salted and flavored with garlic, washed with red wine and rubbed with juniper berries, and then left to season for a period ranging from three to six months. It is a product that delivers aromas and intense flavors, delicately spiced.

The product is so rare and appreciated that it has been provided with the "Presidio" for the preservation and development of its quality by the Slow Food Movement.

**Salame Prealpino Varesino** This is the historical "filzetta" produced in the province of Varese with pure-pork meats, hand-tied with dark rope and aromatic tastes, prepared by macerating the *Thymus Vulgaris* (spontaneous on the hills of the Varese area) in wine. Such treatment distinguishes the Salami Prealpino Varesino from other similar products. Seasoning and finishing lasts at least five weeks. When placed on the market, Salame Prealpino Varesino must have the numbered mark issued by the Consortium.

**"Salamini di capra"** (goat's salami) are salami traditionally produced in Valcuvia. They are obtained by grinding well-degreased and mixed goat's meat, in appropriate proportions, with pig fat adequately selected for reasons of organoleptic nature and conservation. To make the glaze of goat less noticeable, in the mixture of ground meat, spices are added with dosages and recipes often gloomily guarded by the manufacturer.

Another product, very fragrant, from the unmistakable flavoring based on fine spices is the Lardo Lonzato Monterosa. It is obtained by salting and aromatizing a particular dorsal fraction of Italian pigs called "lard with lonza". Flavored with fine spices that give it a full and harmonious taste.





**"The Lake Maggiore Veleno"** (Poison of Lake Maggiore) the aperitif par excellence of Sesto Calende and its surroundings (but also appreciated abroad) was born in the 60s but patented and registered only in 2015 for the 100 years of the Olearo family's business in marketing of wines.

Composed of Piedmont vermouth, bitter, gin and natural aromas, it must be served strictly cold, smooth (preferred version by the customers of the Olearo winery) or with ice, soda water and orange peel.



**"Un quai cos"** (something) is a herbal liqueur with a low alcohol content (25% vol), digestive from the lovable taste. It is produced by the Garbini Liquorificio, which has been producing, by 3 generations, liqueurs, bitter with herbal infusions, young and aged grappa, grappa with herbs and roots, liqueurs with fruit.



**"Elixir al Borducan"** is the liquor of Sacro Monte, an orange-based infusion and aromatic herbs invented by Garibaldi Davide Bregonzio in 1872, whose recipe came to us, handed down from father to son



**The Amaro of Santa Maria del Monte** (sold exclusively at the Emporio of Santa Maria del Monte, on Via Beata Moriggi Caterina 22, Santa Maria del Monte in Varese) a herbal infusion cleverly dosed according to an old local herbal recipe. Great after a meal for a digestive effect or as an accompaniment to Mustazzitt.



**The "Amaretto di Saronno"** is not a distilled liquor but rather an alcoholic infusion, so it is also widely used in homemade preparation, has a gradation of about 28 °, can be drunk smooth or with ice and is also used as a base in the preparation of other drinks. The original recipe involves the use of essential almond oils mixed with spices from the sweet fragrance, giving it a sweet-bitter taste, an amber color and an almond aftertaste.

Its origins date back to 1500, when the painter Bernardino Luini was commissioned in the city of Saronno to create a fresco that depicted "The Adoration of the Magi", still visible at the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin of Miracles. The painter, in love with his innkeeper, was inspired by her to portray the image of her Madonna, and she thanked him giving him an elixir of herbs, toasted sugar, bitter almonds and brandy.

To counter any imitation, since 1971 the brand has become DiSaronno Original.

**Grappa d'Angera Rossi d'Angera** devoted itself to the production of grappa and liqueurs since 1847. The maturation in





wood gives the talents of elegance and completeness that accompany it to the greatest distillates in the world.

### **Beer Poretti**

On December 26, 1877 in Valganna, the first brewing of the Birrificio Angelo Poretti saw the light. Its founder Angelo Poretti by traveling to Austria, Bohemia, Bavaria (all belonging to the Austrian Empire) learned the recipes and the secrets of the best beer masters. Back in Italy, he built his brewery in Valganna, which was chosen for the pure water of its sources, which is indispensable for a quality beer. Poretti Beer is replicated by Carlsberg Italy.



Laveno, Cerro, Mombello Beer



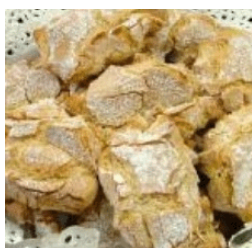
### **Wine**

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, viticulture was very widespread in Varesotto and represented an important source of jobs and income. Vespolina, Ughetta, Corbera, Pignolo, Moretto, Schiava, White Chiavennasca were the names of some grapes. From Varese to Angera, from "La Bassa" (lower plain) to the Swiss border and to the banks of the seven lakes, the province was all a vineyard.

Things began to change towards the middle of the nineteenth century, with disease of the vines that faltered the vineyards. In the Pre-Alpine area there was an extreme attempt to replant the American vine. But soon they preferred to go to the poor Apulian and southern wines that cost little. Bachiculture guaranteed a higher income for peasant families and the growing emigration, which attracted youth, completed the revolution. Thus the vineyards disappeared almost everywhere and Varese discovered a more profitable tourist vocation and replaced the rows of vineyards with Italian gardens. For some years, a production of wines extracted from local vines has been obtained, which in 2005 received the Typical Geographical Indication "Ronchi Varesini". The name is inspired by the characteristic cultivation of terraces (ronchi o miogni) typical of the province of Varese since the times of Carlo Borromeo. In the middle of the fifteenth century, when he was cardinal in Rome, he sent the wine in barrels, via Genoa, by the sea, directly from Valceresio where the family owned the castle of Frascarolo, preferring it to the celebrated wine of Frascati and Marino. Even the prison of Varese (the miogni) rises on land once grown to vineyards and gets its name from it.



Among the producers are: Cascina Piano di Angera, Cascina Ronchetto di Morazzone, Tenuta Tovaglieri of Golasecca, Farming by Giovanni Malnati of Masnago and Azienda Vitivinicola Laghi di Insubria. Their wines are San Quirico, Sebuino, Angliano, Pascale, Serpillo, Ticinum, Angleria, Brugus and Monte Tabor. They are excellent scented and soft wines, red, rosé and white, coming



from nebbiolo and merlot grapes, as well as gamaret, pinot, chardonnay And malvasia.

The Mott Carè wine, produced by Cascina al Piano di Angera, is among the ten best dessert wines reported by Vini Buoni d'Italia (Good wines of Italy).

Produced in Ranco in Caravalle, Mott Carè is a Malvasia-based "muffato" with a particularly sweet no sweet taste. The first sweet and pleasing sensation given by Malvasia is accompanied by a bitterness of almond that you will later perceive.

**Honey Varesino** is D.O.P. and is protected by the "Consorzio Qualità Miele Varesino" which aims to safeguard it both in production and in marketing. In particular, the three types of honey protected are:

Honey Millefiori, a pleasant and varied flavor based on the production area and strong aroma, is derived from the pollen of different flowers and the "melata" of several plants. Great for preparing homemade cakes and for breakfast.

Acacia honey, slightly amber color, delicate aroma and very sweet flavor. It is suitable for accompanying seasoned sheep cheese and fresh seasonal fruit.

Chestnut honey, with strong, slightly bitter aroma, dark color tending to black. It goes well with seasoned goat cheese and goat mixed cow cheese.

**The asparagus of Cantello** is a variety of French-violet white asparagus (the Early Rose d'Argenteuil), cultivated here since the 1800s for perfect compatibility with the soil and the local climate. They have a delicate taste characterized by an unmistakable aroma that stems from the balance between sweet notes and slightly bitter notes. They are excellent when cooked, combined with rice or eggs, namely "Milanese style", or raw accompanied with fresh cheeses, especially goat cheese or different types of raw or marinated fish. They are also rich in vitamins and minerals and stimulate diuresis so much that they are an adjuvant against kidney stones and rheumatism, but they must be consumed with moderation.

Cantello is one of the last areas of asparagus production in Lombardy, and every second Sunday in May they organize a festival with sales and tastes of this delicious vegetable, conjugated in so many different ways.

**The "Perzic de Munà"** (Monate peaches) are typical of the area near Lake Monate, particularly in the towns of Travedona Monate, Comabbio, Osmate and Cadrezzate. The microclimate of the place allows to obtain white peaches, the "Perzic de Munà" (pesche di Monate) that are particularly suitable for long-time storage in water and sugar and in typical cans.

Peaches, strictly white and compact pulp, are collected and packed in a day to store in water and sugar without preservatives and colorants.

**Amaretti di Gallarate:** The historic recipe (almonds, sweet almonds, egg yolk and sugar) dates back to the end of the eighteenth century and attributes the paternity to the famous Furlandoni, old pastry shop of Gallarate.

Legend has it that the shape of the amaretti was born from its own misfortune: the pastry chef would prepare biscuits and then go to sleep. During the night a cat walked on the fresh dough, breaking it with the paws. Obviously, at the awakening, the pastry chef was not very happy but, on the advice of his wife, he tried to sell the product anyway: it was a success that goes on to date. But this is little more than a legend; in fact, the gesture with which the pastry chef crushes the almonds one by one, giving it the shape, is



strange, but it is part of a dexterity from which their flavor depends.



**Amaretti of Saronno.** In 1718, when Cardinal of Milan , Agostino Cusani visited the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin of the Miracles of Saronno, a young couple prepared a mixture of sugar, almonds and egg whites that, leavened in the oven, gave rise to round biscuits called Amaretti. Later, the Lazzaroni family, who had moved from Teglio to Saronno, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, became the champion of this confectionary specialty, initially in the small family lab, then at the industrial level thanks to the founding of D. Lazzaroni & C.



**Brutti e Buoni** (The Ugly and Good) of Gavirate's ancient recipe dates back to 1878 and was created by Costantino Veniani. It is the sweet tip of Gavirate, a tourist resort on the shores of Lake Varese.

The fragrance of almonds and roasted hazelnuts and the delicate vanilla aroma make the Brutti and Buoni the best cakes to be enjoyed every time: accompanied by sparkling wines, liqueur wines, creams, good coffee or a smoking cup of chocolate.

**The desserts of the Sacro Monte di Varese** are for sale (or tasting free) exclusively at the Emporio of Santa Maria del Monte, on Via Beata Moriggi Caterina 22, in Santa Maria del Monte (Varese):

The Brazadelle, bacon-baked buns, were already offered to pilgrims in 922 thanks to the gifts brought to the sanctuary.

Every family used to bring them home and give them to the elderly or the sick who could not go on pilgrimage to the Black Madonna of Santa Maria del Monte.

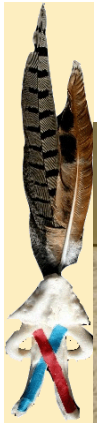
The Girometta was purchased by pilgrims along the Rosary Street, blessed and brought home as a devotional souvenir. Obtained from the Brazadelle clippings, it had different shapes in the past: squares, hearts, cloves, cinnamon) without either egg or yeast.

Pandolce, sweets that combine the spices used in Mustazzitt. At the end of the 1700 with the invasion of the French, the Girometta became a soldier in pasta bread with ornamented colored feathers. The Mustazzitt, spread a little everywhere in Varesotto, in Sacro Monte they were prepared by the nuns and donated to the pilgrims to thank them for the offerings given to the sanctuary.

They are prepared only with water, sugar, flour and spices (nutmeg), chestnuts and local honey.

**Dolce Varese:** also known as "Amorpolenta" because it contains polenta flour, it is a soft, creamy, very light pie that can be eaten at any time of the day, great for breakfast or afternoon tea. It is prepared with simple ingredients such as chopped almonds, yellow and white flour and then sprinkled with a layer of velvety sugar. It can be stored for several days, without any coloring or preservative.

**Camels of puff pastry:** traditional dessert of Varese and surroundings for the Epiphany which is also the feast of the Three Kings. According to local legends, the relics of the Magi, stolen by Barbarossa in the church of Sant'Eustorgio in Milan and donated by the emperor to the archbishop of Cologne, passed through the territory of Varese. The form would derive from the best known mount of the Three Kings: precisely the camel. From the first days of the year, pastry shops, bars, bakeries and grocery stores begin to exhibit these sweets. It is not clear what the precise boundaries are to the "territory of the camel", but it is known that in the confectioneries outside Varese it is difficult to find it. The classic camel is the "smooth" camel, made with simple puff pastry, but it must be good and very thin puff pastry. The basic ingredients are



water, flour and salt for the batter, and then butter. The butter should be wrapped in the batter and pulled several times, until thin sheets. The veils, generally no more than 6 millimeters high, must rest for 15 minutes, and then are used to compose the final mixture, to be cut to obtain the shape of the camel. And to give lucidity to the upper layer, you need the sugar to be distributed on the cake before it is baked, to become golden and shiny.

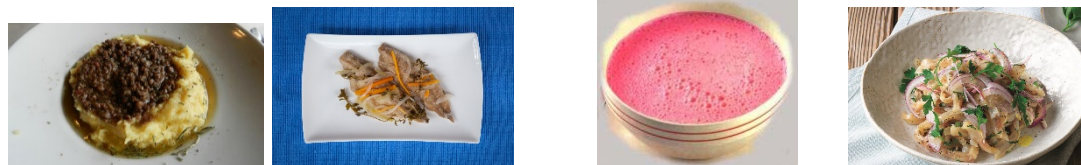
<i>Traditional dish</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
<i>Asparagi con uova 'in cereghin'</i>	<i>Asparagus at "oxen eye" style</i>
<i>Brusciti</i>	<i>Meat</i>
<i>Buosino</i>	<i>Hot chocolate and coffe</i>
<i>Büséca</i>	<i>tripe</i>
<i>Cassoeura</i>	<i>meat</i>
<i>Cupétt</i>	<i>Waffles with dried fruit</i>
<i>Girometta</i>	<i>biscuits</i>
<i>Insalata e ciapp</i>	<i>Salad and hard boiled eggs</i>
<i>Lavarello alla griglia</i>	<i>fish</i>
<i>Mach</i>	<i>Chestnut and milk</i>
<i>Mustazzitt</i>	<i>biscuits</i>
<i>Nervetti in insalata</i>	<i>meat</i>
<i>Pancotto</i>	<i>Stale bread</i>
<i>Pulti, fasoeu e verzi</i>	<i>Cabbage, beans, pork</i>
<i>Ris e erborinn</i>	<i>Rice and parsley</i>
<i>Ris in cagnùn</i>	<i>rice</i>
<i>Rustisciàda con polenta</i>	<i>pork</i>
<i>Rusumada</i>	<i>Egg, sugar, wine</i>
<i>Stracotto di castagne</i>	<i>chestnuts</i>
<i>Stùà in cunscia</i>	<i>Braised beef</i>



*Appetizer of lake fish*



## From ris in cagnun to rusumada: grandmothers' recipes



**What are the typical recipes of the area and what was boiled in the pots of the families of Lake Maggiore and Varese until half a century ago?**

**Polenta and bruscitti:** bruscitti is a second course made with finely chopped and cooked beef for a long time. Other ingredients are wild fennel seeds and red wine accompanied by steaming polenta.

**Carpione di pesce di lago:** the preparation of food in carpione is rather old because it allowed a longer preservation of food. Marinating also has the advantage of covering up any taste of mud that freshwater fish often take on. Marinating is obtained by preparing a sautéed onion base flavoured with sage, bay leaf, any other medicinal herbs and pepper. When the onions are withered, vinegar is added and evaporated.

The **rusumada** is a substantial snack based on one or more eggs (some use the whole egg, others only the red, still others the red and then whip the whites to snow to keep the cream softer) beaten with sugar and then reinforced with a glass of wine or Marsala.

**Nervetti salad:** despite the name, the dish does not contemplate the presence of nerves: the name derives in fact from "nervitt" (in Lombard dialect), which indicates the cartilage of the knee and the shin of the calf, the basis of the preparation. The dish consists of the cartilages, after a suitable boiling in a light broth of carrots and celery, cut into strips and joined together with onions, salt, pepper, oil and vinegar. Often white Spanish beans and parsley are added, or onions in vinegar are added instead of onions (cipollotto).



**Rice** is one of the protagonists of many recipes: with **perch fish** in the municipalities overlooking the lake, with milk (**rice and milk** is prepared by cooking the rice in milk "elongated" by a part of water with a pinch of salt and, depending on taste, a knob of butter at the end), parsley (**rice and erburin** is cooked in broth, creamed with butter and cheese and enriched with chopped parsley leaves and added at the end of cooking) or **rice in cagnun** (cooked in water and flavoured with garlic, parmesan cheese, butter and sage). Rice in cagnone, as the name suggests, is not a risotto, since the grains of rice, during cooking, are boiled and not stirred. The name of this dish comes from the term cagnun, which in the dialects of the areas of origin of the dish means "insect larva": this name derives from the appearance that the grains of rice take after the boiling phase, or a squat and irregular shape.

**Risotto alla milanese** (yellow risotto) is a Milanese dish par excellence: it is prepared with beef broth, beef bone marrow, lard (instead of butter) and cheese, flavoured and coloured with saffron, often served with Osso Buco.

Among the legends, more or less fanciful, which flourished around the origin of Milanese risotto, there is one that enjoys more credit. A legend that makes the use of saffron in the preparation of the famous risotto go back to pure chance. According to a manuscript found at the Biblioteca Trivulziana, the birth of this speciality is also closely linked to the Duomo of Milan.

We are in 1574 and Maestro Valerio di Fiandra, a Flemish from Leuven, was involved in the creation of the stained-glass windows of the Milanese Cathedral. At his side worked an assistant called Saffron: the reason for his nickname was linked to the habit of the assistant to always add a bit of saffron to the colors, to create a more brilliant effect. One day to make fun of him, the Master told the young helper that if he continued like this, he would end up putting saffron into the dishes as well. Saffron on 8th September 1574, on the occasion of the wedding of Valerio's daughter, agreed with the cook a variation on the wedding menu: a pinch of golden spice would be added to the rice, seasoned with simple butter. To the great amazement of the young man, the diners appreciated the idea both for the taste and for the coloured note added to the dish.

Another current of thought associates the birth of Risotto alla Milanese with the tasty Sicilian arancini. According to this version of history, a Sicilian cook, who moved to Milan, tried to prepare the traditional arancini, or arancine.

However, not being able to recover all the ingredients necessary for the traditional Sicilian dish, she tried an alternative version creating the first saffron risotto in history!

Another version dates the birth of Risotto alla Milanese to the tradition of medieval kosher cuisine, that is Jewish,

The recipe for saffron risotto would thus have been exported from Sicily to northern Italy thanks to Jewish merchants in the Middle Ages.



**Cotoletta alla Milanese** (Milanese style cutlet/veal): Traditionally it is prepared with a veal cutlet that is breaded with egg. In Milan, the dish dates back at least to 1134, where it is mentioned in a banquet for the canon of the Cathedral of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan. Further evidence dates back to the first century BC, indicating that the Romans enjoyed thinly sliced dishes, which were breaded and fried. The dish is reminiscent of the Austrian dish, Wiener Schnitzel, which originated in Austria around the 19th century.

**Panettone (Panetun)** : is a type of loaf of sweet bread from Milan, usually prepared for Christmas and New Year. It has a dome shape, which extends from a cylindrical base and is usually about 12-15 cm high for a panettone that weighs 1 kg. Other bases can be used, such as an octagon or a frustum with a star-section shape more common to the pandoro. It is produced during a long process that involves the maturing of the dough. It contains candied orange, cedar and lemon rind, as well as raisins, which are added dry and not wet. It is served in the shape of a wedge, cut vertically, accompanied by hot sweet drinks or a sweet wine. In some regions of Italy, it is served with mascarpone cream, a mascarpone cream, eggs, sometimes dried or candied fruit, and generally a sweet liqueur like amaretto.

**Ossobuco or osso buco** (Lombard: òss bus): this is a speciality made from veal shanks cut across and braised with vegetables, white wine and broth. It is often garnished with gremolata and traditionally served with Milanese risotto or polenta. The marrow in the hole in the bone, a precious delicacy, is the distinctive feature of the dish. The term refers to the bone marrow hole in the centre of the transversely cut calf shank.



### Milk and cheese

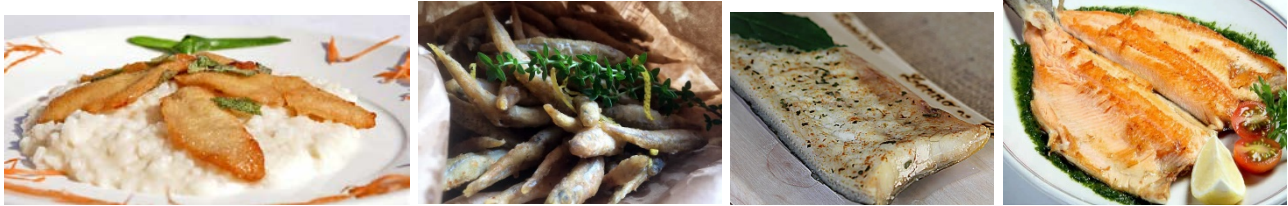
Milk, butter and dairy products in general have long been among the protagonists of the table and dishes of the "grandmothers' kitchen". A characteristic, that of being incurable "furmagiatt" (cheese eaters), which concerns all Lombards, from the plain to the mountains.

**Sancarlin**, a cheese kneaded with pepper and grated cheese, left to rest for about twenty days until a very tasty patina (mould) covered the surface. The Sancarlin is pungent in taste and also in the smell that in a few days impregnated all the kitchen.

The "furmagela" There are two types of "**formaggella**". For excellence there is the formaggella DOP of Luinese: it is a fat cheese with a semi-hard paste characterized by a short time of maturation. The Luinese cheese is a recognized typical product that boasts an ancient tradition (it is mentioned in a "note of the expense made by the reverend priests of Valtravaglia in the visit of monsignor illustrious Cardinal Borromeo made the year 1596 of August") obtained exclusively from whole milk and raw goats "Chamois" of the Alps, Black Verzasca and Saamen, valuable breeds reared mainly on pasture.

The "**formaggina**", a fresh cheese still produced today by some local farms and which was once made at home using freshly milked milk left to rest in the heat, often near the fireplace, is different from the cheese

from the Luinese area. The cheese was good for all seasons: it was in fact an excellent accompaniment to polenta in winter (seasoned "hot" with onions stewed slowly in butter) and as a fresh dish in summer. In addition to Sancarlin, the cheese was also prepared "alla bustocca" seasoned with cucumbers and pickled chilies, tuna, onion, salt, pepper and olive oil. Like all simple products, it is excellent to taste, even simple, with bread or, for a sweeter note, with a drizzle of honey.



### **Typical recipes of Lake Maggiore**

Among the typical flavors of the local cuisine, which is characterized mainly by dishes based on fish from the lake:

**the perch**, which is prepared and served with risotto, following the dictates of an ancient traditional recipe of the place, or filleted and breaded.

**Arborelle (bleaks)**, usually served fried or in carpione

**pike and trout fish**, both very common fish in these areas, normally served boiled and accompanied by mayonnaise. the whitefish, also known as whitefish, and sandra, a fish characterized by a very tender meat and for this reason definitely appreciated by both local residents and tourists visiting.

**The eel**, also known by the name of capitone, which in winter is served in the premises especially on cold days, accompanied by a thick layer of boiling white polenta seasoned with delicious fish sauce.

The stewed eel with polenta is prepared by cutting the fish into slices; these are then floured and fried in boiling oil. The fried pieces of eel are then marinated in vinegar and finally covered with a sauce flavoured with garlic, bay leaf, onion and peeled tomatoes. Also in this case, the eel in sauce is accompanied and served on the table always with slices of grilled polenta.

**The trout of Val Grande** with alpine scents. What makes this dish famous and particularly appreciated is above all the method of cooking the fish: after cleaning, washing and stuffing the inside of the trout with herbs, rub the fish with plenty of butter and cook on soapstone, able to retain and enhance the aromas of the raw material.

But fish is not the only protagonist around here! The mountains of the Val Grande, in Piedmont, those of the Luino and Laveno valleys, in Lombardy, and the opposite shores of the lake are also the symbol of numerous food and wine specialities: the mountain tome offered in the refuges, polenta with roe deer or wild boar, the bresaola of the Val d'Ossola, goat's cheese, honey and wine.

## **From ris in cagnun to rusumada: grandmothers' recipes**



**What are the typical recipes of the area and what was boiled in the pots of the families of Lake Maggiore and Varese until half a century ago?**

**Polenta and bruscitti**: bruscitti is a second course made with finely chopped and cooked beef for a long time. Other ingredients are wild fennel seeds and red wine accompanied by steaming polenta.

**Carpione di pesce di lago**: the preparation of food in carpione is rather old because it allowed a longer preservation of food. Marinating also has the advantage of covering up any taste of mud that freshwater fish often take on. Marinating is obtained by preparing a sautéed onion base flavoured with sage, bay leaf, any other medicinal herbs and pepper. When the onions are withered, vinegar is added and evaporated.

The **rusumada** is a substantial snack based on one or more eggs (some use the whole egg, others only the red, still others the red and then whip the whites to snow to keep the cream softer) beaten with sugar and then reinforced with a glass of wine or Marsala.



**Nervetti salad:** despite the name, the dish does not contemplate the presence of nerves: the name derives in fact from "nervitt" (in Lombard dialect), which indicates the cartilage of the knee and the shin of the calf, the basis of the preparation. The dish consists of the cartilages, after a suitable boiling in a light broth of carrots and celery, cut into strips and joined together with onions, salt, pepper, oil and vinegar. Often white Spanish beans and parsley are added, or onions in vinegar are added instead of onions (cipollotto).



**Rice** is one of the protagonists of many recipes: with **perch fish** in the municipalities overlooking the lake, with milk (**rice and milk** is prepared by cooking the rice in milk "elongated" by a part of water with a pinch of salt and, depending on taste, a knob of butter at the end), parsley (**rice and erburin** is cooked in broth, creamed with butter and cheese and enriched with chopped parsley leaves and added at the end of cooking) or **rice in cagnun** (cooked in water and flavoured with garlic, parmesan cheese, butter and sage). Rice in cagnone, as the name suggests, is not a risotto, since the grains of rice, during cooking, are boiled and not stirred. The name of this dish comes from the term cagnun, which in the dialects of the areas of origin of the dish means "insect larva": this name derives from the appearance that the grains of rice take after the boiling phase, or a squat and irregular shape.

**Risotto alla milanese** (yellow risotto) is a Milanese dish par excellence: it is prepared with beef broth, beef bone marrow, lard (instead of butter) and cheese, flavoured and coloured with saffron, often served with Osso Buco.

Among the legends, more or less fanciful, which flourished around the origin of Milanese risotto, there is one that enjoys more credit. A legend that makes the use of saffron in the preparation of the famous risotto go back to pure chance. According to a manuscript found at the Biblioteca Trivulziana, the birth of this speciality is also closely linked to the Duomo of Milan.

We are in 1574 and Maestro Valerio di Fiandra, a Flemish from Leuven, was involved in the creation of the stained-glass windows of the Milanese Cathedral. At his side worked an assistant called Saffron: the reason for his nickname was linked to the habit of the assistant to always add a bit of saffron to the colors, to create a more brilliant effect. One day to make fun of him, the Master told the young helper that if he continued like this, he would end up putting saffron into the dishes as well. Saffron on 8th September 1574, on the occasion of the wedding of Valerio's daughter, agreed with the cook a variation on the wedding menu: a pinch of golden spice would be added to the rice, seasoned with simple butter. To the great amazement of the young man, the diners appreciated the idea both for the taste and for the coloured note added to the dish.

Another current of thought associates the birth of Risotto alla Milanese with the tasty Sicilian arancini. According to this version of history, a Sicilian cook, who moved to Milan, tried to prepare the traditional arancini, or arancine.

However, not being able to recover all the ingredients necessary for the traditional Sicilian dish, she tried an alternative version creating the first saffron risotto in history!

Another version dates the birth of Risotto alla Milanese to the tradition of medieval kosher cuisine, that is Jewish,

The recipe for saffron risotto would thus have been exported from Sicily to northern Italy thanks to Jewish merchants in the Middle Ages.



**Cotoletta alla Milanese** (Milanese style cutlet/veal): Traditionally it is prepared with a veal cutlet that is breaded with egg. In Milan, the dish dates back at least to 1134, where it is mentioned in a banquet for the canon of the Cathedral of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan. Further evidence dates back to the first century BC,

indicating that the Romans enjoyed thinly sliced dishes, which were breaded and fried. The dish is reminiscent of the Austrian dish, Wiener Schnitzel, which originated in Austria around the 19th century.

**Panettone (Panetun)** : is a type of loaf of sweet bread from Milan, usually prepared for Christmas and New Year. It has a dome shape, which extends from a cylindrical base and is usually about 12-15 cm high for a panettone that weighs 1 kg. Other bases can be used, such as an octagon or a frustum with a star-section shape more common to the pandoro. It is produced during a long process that involves the maturing of the dough. It contains candied orange, cedar and lemon rind, as well as raisins, which are added dry and not wet. It is served in the shape of a wedge, cut vertically, accompanied by hot sweet drinks or a sweet wine. In some regions of Italy, it is served with mascarpone cream, a mascarpone cream, eggs, sometimes dried or candied fruit, and generally a sweet liqueur like amaretto.

**Ossobuco or osso buco** (Lombard: òss büs): this is a speciality made from veal shanks cut across and braised with vegetables, white wine and broth. It is often garnished with gremolata and traditionally served with Milanese risotto or polenta. The marrow in the hole in the bone, a precious delicacy, is the distinctive feature of the dish. The term refers to the bone marrow hole in the centre of the transversely cut calf shank.

**Cereghin** (altar boy, in Lombard): These are fried eggs with butter, but the butter must be abundant enough to cover the egg with its foam during the very short cooking time. It is ready when the edges of the egg white begin to curl and darken. Then salt and serve on the table accompanied by freshly made polenta.

**Uselit Scapàa** (birds escaped into Lombardy) slices of veal or pork that should be beaten well, put on each slice of thin bacon and half a leaf of sage. Roll up the slices and put them on a wooden stick with three or four at a time, putting between one and the other a diced bacon and half sage leaf, and at the beginning and at the end of each stick. Brown them quickly, so that they take on colour, in the fried butter and then lower the heat to finish cooking internally. They must remain soft and leave a lot of sauce, so that you can also eat with polenta.

**Busecca (Büseca, Trippa alla milanese)**: This is a hot dish prepared with tripe and beans. It is very tasty and will take you back in time. This dish, in fact, of poor origin, was originally eaten by farmers on Christmas night. The main ingredients: tripe, white beans, bacon, tomato. The menu is marked with the words 'foiolo', the entrails of intestines, but more generally in Milan they are called 'busecca'. The dish is so emblematic of Milan that the epithet 'buseconi', a tripe-eater, is used to call the inhabitants of the city themselves.

**Cassoeula/Cassoeura**: This is a dish made from pork (rind, ears, legs, etc..) that has its roots in the legend. Its origins are uncertain but it is a dish that has conquered the tastes of historical figures of every age. Main ingredients: pork (ribs, rind, ears, legs), savoy cabbage

**Polenta** is one of those dishes that is cooked in every way. The most famous and traditional is undoubtedly the polenta with cod, a typical dinner on Friday night, but also with cheese (to try absolutely with the local gorgonzola) and any other type of condiment. Polenta is an ancient dish made with corn flour ("yellow polenta"). In the past, it was the staple food of the poor cuisine in northern Italy. The most widely used basic cereal is corn, imported into Europe from the Americas in the fifteenth century, which gives it its characteristic yellow color, while previously (since the times of the ancient Romans and even before ...) was darker because it was made mainly with spelt or rye, and later also with buckwheat, imported from Asia. Polenta is produced by cooking for a long time a semi-liquid mass consisting of a mixture of water and flour (usually coarse-grained) of the cereal. The flour is sprinkled in boiling salted water, in a pot (traditionally made of copper), and is stirred continuously with a stick of stone wood, called "cannella", for at least an hour.

**Barbajada** is a typical dessert of the city of Milan. Excellent at any time of day, it is a mixture of chocolate, coffee and milk that dates back more than two centuries. In 1800 it was a very popular drink but even now it's no joke. Main ingredients: chocolate, coffee, milk, sugar.





**"Bollito," Al'Less/UI Less.** The speciality is cooked in different cuts of meat and accompanied by the appropriate sauces - first of all, Piedmontese green sauce, mustard and horseradish - and the vegetables with which the meat was cooked.

**Mondeghili** are usually made with boiled leftovers. But bother calling them meatballs!

**Rustin negà** Literally, 'drowned roast'. Rustin negà al plurale fa rustitt negàa, but this is not the only oddity: veal knots are browned with butter and sage and then drowned - hence the name - in wine and broth: accompanied by polenta.

**Asparagus with eggs in the ox's eye** ("sparg cont l'oeuf in cereghin") asparagus with the egg in the ox's eye dusted with a little Parmesan cheese. Once cooked, the eggs are reminiscent of the 'cleric' of the monks.

**Buosino** is a mix of hot chocolate and coffee topped with milk foam and dark chocolate grains, accompanied by a teaspoon of chocolate and strictly served in a transparent cup.

**The cupètt** are almond sweets. Busto Arsizio's recipe uses wafers, honey, walnut kernels, shelled hazelnuts, candied orange and cedar peel.

**Insalada e ciapp (Salad and cheeks)**, these are hard-boiled eggs, cut in half and left to rest on a bed of fresh salad with the convex part facing upwards, thus figuring in the imagination of our great-grandparents the anatomical part "b" of the peasant girls. This is why the apparently sacrilegious combination with Easter is explained, since the egg has always been a symbol of the mystery of life and rebirth.

**Mach** (Mak): chestnut soup. Chop 1 kilo of dried, cleaned chestnuts in a mortar. Boil them in water for about 1 hour until you get a thick mush. Add 1 litre of raw milk in which you have previously diluted 6 tablespoons of white flour, salt to taste and let it boil slowly for about 20 minutes, stirring from time to time. The mach is excellent but also the next day, eaten cold or fried in a little butter.

**Pancotto (Pancott, Panada)** is a soup prepared with pieces of stale bread boiled in broth or water and seasoned. It is a dish from the kitchen of recovery that recalls the thrifty and humble mentality of peasant culture that would never waste a crumb of bread.

**Pulti, Fasoeu and Verzi** One of the oldest dishes of the local cuisine. The name is clearly derived from the Roman "puls", polenta that the ancients made with spelt or other cereals and that was the staple food of the people. Stew a thinly sliced onion and a pale cabbage, flaked and chopped. Two tablespoons of virgin olive oil. Add water, a spongy beef bone, two small pork rind, 300 g of white Spanish beans or "toscanelli dell'occhio". When it boils, put a piece of minced lard together with a clove of garlic and a tuft of parsley. Salt. When the cabbage and beans are cooked, add a small handful of durum wheat semolina (once used to be spelt) until it becomes a very soft polenta; add cheese and pepper in abundance. Bowl and cover until a film forms on which, at the time of eating, you must make, each on its bowl, a cross of virgin olive oil. The oil cross was a peasant sign of thanksgiving to the Lord.

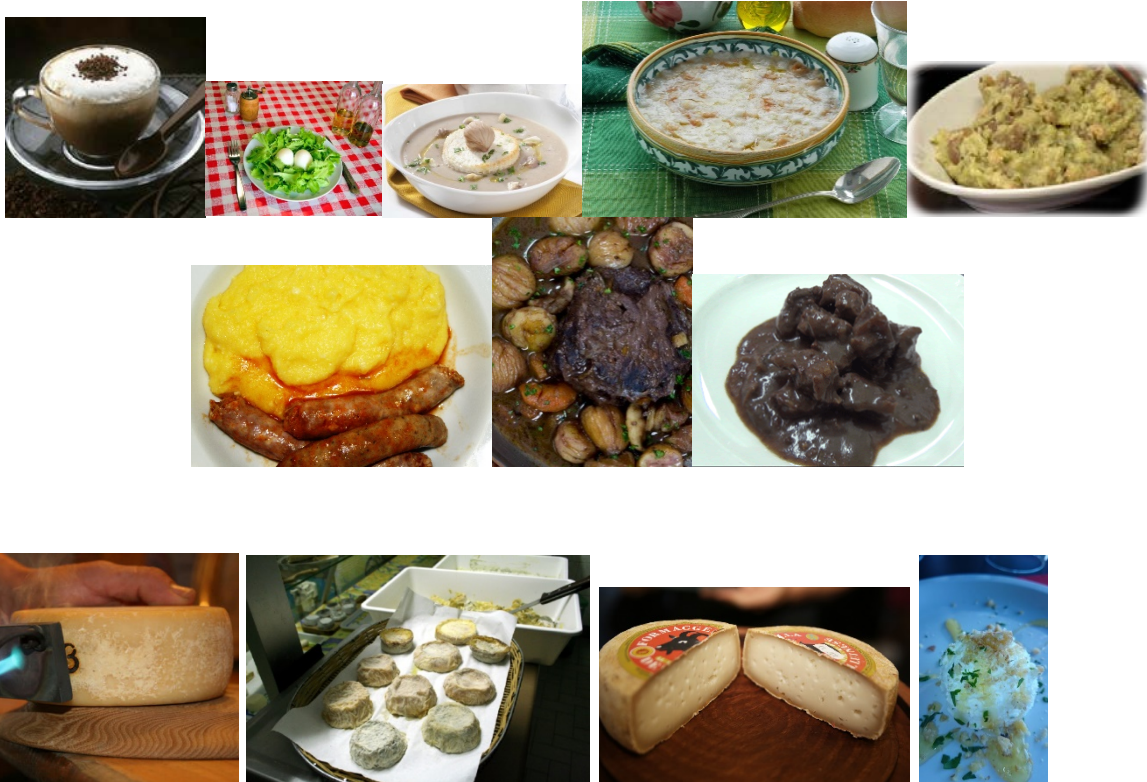
**Rustisciada:** luganega (thin pork sausage- about twice the weight of the loin) in big touches, cooked for a few minutes with white wine. Add the meat and cook for a quarter of an hour on a slightly lively flame. Apart from this, stew abundant onions in large slices in butter which, when well withered, are poured into the first receptacle leaving on the stove for another 5 minutes. At the end, add salt and pepper and serve with polenta.

**Stufato con castagne** (Stew with chestnuts). Soak the dried chestnuts in warm water at least four hours before cooking. Chop the shallots and celery. Heat the milk in a small pot. Pour the oil into a large-bottomed pot, heat it and add the chopped shallot and celery. Fry quickly and let the pieces of meat fall into the pot. Turn them continuously as they take on colour from all sides. Pour the wine and let it fade with the stove over high heat. Add the hot milk, the chestnuts (well drained if dry or fresh that you have boiled), the sprig of rosemary and a pinch of salt. Lower the heat to a minimum and start stewing for at least an hour, partly without the lid: the milk, evaporating a little, forms a thick cream on the bottom of the pot. It should be



garnished with the sauce that you can prepare by blending the cooking liquid, a few chestnuts, celery and a tablespoon of oil.

**Stua 'in cunscia.** It was prepared for the boyfriend's first visit to his beloved's family. Ingredients: Beef cup, butter, onion, red wine (Barbera, Barolo and Squinzano), sliced bacon, cloves, bay leaves, rosemary, juniper, potatoes, salt and pepper. Cut the meat into pieces as big as oranges, place them in a container and sprinkle with bay leaves, rosemary, juniper and a little salt and pepper. Cover everything with red wine and leave to infuse for a couple of days, so that the meat absorbs the wine. In a terracotta pot (stuin) add the butter and fry the slices of bacon. Add the pieces of meat and the pickled onion with the cloves - which will be removed halfway through cooking. Cook over low heat for about 3 hours, wetting the meat with the melting wine. When the meat is almost cooked, add the potatoes.



### **Milk and cheese**

Milk, butter and dairy products in general have long been among the protagonists of the table and dishes of the "grandmothers' kitchen". A characteristic, that of being incurable "furmaggiatt" (cheese eaters), which concerns all Lombards, from the plain to the mountains.

**Sancarlin**, a cheese kneaded with pepper and grated cheese, left to rest for about twenty days until a very tasty patina (mould) covered the surface. The Sancarlin is pungent in taste and also in the smell that in a few days impregnated all the kitchen.

The "furmagela" There are two types of "**formaggella**". For excellence there is the formaggella DOP of Luinese: it is a fat cheese with a semi-hard paste characterized by a short time of maturation. The Luinese cheese is a recognized typical product that boasts an ancient tradition (it is mentioned in a "note of the expense made by the reverend priests of Valtravaglia in the visit of monsignor illustrious Cardinal Borromeo made the year 1596 of August") obtained exclusively from whole milk and raw goats "Chamois" of the Alps, Black Verzasca and Saamen, valuable breeds reared mainly on pasture.

The "**formaggina**", a fresh cheese still produced today by some local farms and which was once made at home using freshly milked milk left to rest in the heat, often near the fireplace, is different from the cheese from the Luinese area. The cheese was good for all seasons: it was in fact an excellent accompaniment to polenta in winter (seasoned "hot" with onions stewed slowly in butter) and as a fresh dish in summer. In addition to Sancarlin, the cheese was also prepared "alla bustocca" seasoned with cucumbers and pickled chilies, tuna, onion, salt, pepper and olive oil. Like all simple products, it is excellent to taste, even simple, with bread or, for a sweeter note, with a drizzle of honey.



### **Typical recipes of Lake Maggiore**

Among the typical flavors of the local cuisine, which is characterized mainly by dishes based on fish from the lake:

**the perch** ("Pesce Persico/ Pes Persic"), which is prepared and served with risotto, following the dictates of an ancient traditional recipe of the place, or filleted and breaded. It is important to remember that Royal Perch should not be confused with African Perch, which is now found in all Italian fisheries but is not quite as valuable as that of Lake Maggiore. Our fish is sold in fillets of a white tending to pink colour, small and thin, unlike the less prized African fish whose fillets are much larger, thicker and of a deep pink colour.

The bleaks (**arborelle**), usually served fried or in carpione

Pike (**Luccio**) and trout(**trota**), both very common in these areas, are normally served boiled and accompanied by mayonnaise.

The "**Lavarello or Coregone**" (whitefish) is a very delicate fish that - in these parts - is cooked filleted, passed in beaten egg, floured and fried in butter with sage leaves. Following another ancient and exquisite recipe from Lake Maggiore, this fish is fried and then seasoned with a meat sauce, prepared separately with rosemary and sage.

The **Sandra/Lucio**perca (zander fish), a fish characterized by a very tender meat and for this reason definitely appreciated by locals and tourists alike.

Not to forget "**il Salmerino**" (char) and "**la Carpa**" (the carp).

The "**Anguilla**" (the eel) also known as "capitone", which in winter is served in the premises especially on cold days, accompanied by a thick layer of boiling white polenta seasoned with delicious fish sauce.

The stewed eel with polenta is prepared by cutting the fish into slices; these are then floured and fried in boiling oil. The fried pieces of eel are then marinated in vinegar and finally covered with a sauce flavoured with garlic, bay leaf, onion and peeled tomatoes. Also in this case, the eel in sauce is accompanied and served on the table always with slices of grilled polenta.

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But fish is not the only protagonist around here! The mountains of the Val Grande, in Piedmont, those of the Luino and Laveno valleys, in Lombardy, and the opposite shores of the lake are also the symbol of numerous food and wine specialities: Toma del Mottarone, polenta with roe deer or wild boar, bresaola from the Val d'Ossola, goat's cheese, honey and wine. Stock up on the delicate and highly perfumed **Laveno Honey**, which is produced in three types: wildflower, chestnut and acacia. The cured meats go very well with full-bodied red **wines** such as Ghemme Docg and Nebbiolo from the Novara hills, while in the Ossola valleys the famous Prunent, Nouv Bruschet and Cà d'Matè, suitable for robust dishes, red meats and cheeses. If you are

on the shores of the lake you can delight your palate with the wines of Angera, which are called "**Ronchi Varesini**", both white, red and rosé products.

Let's jump again and treat ourselves to a bit of cake with "**le margheritine**" (small daisies), small fragrant delicacies of fine short pastry made with butter and eggs, flavoured with lemon, typical of Stresa, created in 1854 in honor of Queen Margherita (yes, just the same person who inspired the name of the famous Neapolitan pizza) by pastry chef Piero Antonio Bolongaro. They are found in ovens and pastry shops typical of the area and are characterized by a round and smooth shape (and not petal-shaped) with a diameter of about 5 centimeters, with a small hollow in the center, where you collect the icing sugar that covers them. If you spend a few days here, in addition to stocking up on cold cuts, wines and cheese, don't forget to visit Verbania to taste the delicate **Intresine** di Verbania, butter biscuits sprinkled with almonds and hazelnuts.

