

Tuscan Castagnaccio

(Castagnaccio Toscano)

Provides: 10 servings. Preparation time: about 1 hour.

Castagnaccio is a traditional dessert from Tuscany. It is thought to originate from the Lucca province, as testified by a document from 1553, talking about 'Pilade da Lucca', the castagnaccio inventor. As can be gathered from the name, the ingredient that characterises this recipe is the chestnut or more specifically, the chestnut flour. In the mountainous area of Lucca province, Garfagnana, there has historically been a presence of chestnut trees. Here they grow everywhere, from the bottom of the valley up to a height of one thousand meters. Their fruits and products have been the staple of the rural population for centuries. In this area the chestnut flour, also called 'farina di neccio' (neccio flour) substituted wheat flour: this is why the chestnut tree is also called the 'bread tree'. Since 2004, the 'farina di neccio della Garfagnana' has been a Protected Designation of Origin product (PDO). In the past, the main ingredients of castagnaccio were only chestnut flour, water and oil, all 'poor' ingredients, available in the area. The addition of orange peel, walnuts, or rosemary was a variation of the basic recipe depending on local tradition and availability. Also the addition of pine-nuts and raisins (locally called zibibbi) was very common, but not in all mountain areas. Today, the choice of the optional ingredients of castagnaccio is determined mainly by family traditions and personal taste. Many areas of Tuscany have maintained the castagnaccio tradition in addition to Lucca province and the Garfagnana area. Among these, as an example, Lunigiana (the PDO is currently under approval), Pratomagno, and Casentino are traditional production areas.

Ingredients

570g Chestnut flour
840g Water (some use milk)
60g Extra virgin olive oil
3g Salt

Optional ingredients:

50g Pine nuts, 100g Raisins, 70g Walnuts,
35g Orange peel, 8g Rosemary

Nutritional information per 100g of edible portion	
Energy (kcal / kJ)	231 / 972
Protein (g) (N x 6.25)	3.4
Total Fat (g) of which saturated fatty acids (g)	6.8 1.1
Carbohydrates (g) of which sugars (g)	39.0 16.2
Dietary fibre (g)	5.8
Sodium (mg)	275

Values obtained from laboratory analyses



Preparation

Add water (or milk) and the salt to the previously sifted chestnut flour, stirring with a wooden spoon, a table spoon or a whisk until a smooth and fluid batter is obtained. Raisins, pine nuts, walnuts or chopped orange peel may be added, to taste. Mix well and pour into a round pie-dish (aluminium or tinned), of approximately 30cm diameter, previously greased with some extra virgin olive oil. Pour the remaining extra virgin olive oil on the surface of the batter. Optionally, decorate with rosemary leaves, pine nuts and walnuts, and finally put it in the wooden oven for 40–50 minutes. The dish should be put in the oven when the temperature is around 200°C, after having completely removed the live charcoal and when all ashes are deposited. If an electric or gas oven is used, heat the oven to 200°C and lower the thermostat to 150°C when the baking dish is introduced. The chocolate colour crust that forms with the heat should crack, reminiscent of the wrinkled bark of a chestnut tree.

Sources

Regione Toscana – ARSIA – Agenzia Regionale per lo Sviluppo e l'Innovazione nel Settore Agricolo-forestale. www.arsia.it

Tuscany: Garfagnana e Valle del Serchio. Treasures to hand down. www.galgarfagnana.com

Associazione Castanicoltori della Garfagnana. www.associazionecastanicoltori.it

Consorzio Farina di castagne del Pratomagno e del Casentino. www.cm-casentino.toscana.it/agricoltura/consorzio2.asp

Acknowledgements

We thank the Associazione Castanicoltori della Garfagnana, in particular Mr. Ivo Poli and the inhabitants of Sillico (Pievefosciana-LU), mainly Mrs. Giuliana Bonugli, Gertrude Lenzarini, Anna Pieroni, Ginevra Almerini and Mr. Ermete Filippi, that prepared for us five variants of castagnaccio, in the kitchen of Mrs. Pieroni.

For more information on Italian traditional foods contact: the National Institute for Food and Nutrition Research INRAN – Rome www.inran.it (Marletta, Camilli); ISPO Molecular and Nutritional Epidemiology Unit – Florence www.cspo.it (Salvini); IEO Division of Epidemiology and Biostatistics – Milan www.ieo.it (Gnagnarella); the University of Udine www.uniud.it (Parpine)

This work was completed on behalf of the EuroFIR Consortium and funded under the EU 6th Framework Food Quality and Safety Programme. Project number (FP6-513944)