



*Giulia Scarpaleggia*

# From the Markets of Tuscany

*A cookbook*

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Guido Tommasi Editore

# 1. FLORENCE



## *My Love Affair with Florence*

I came to know Florence around age 25, when I left the security of my family home in Val d'Elsa and Siena, where I had studied, to venture out into the big city. Perhaps owing to my being a country girl, Florence seemed larger than life to my eyes. I found it enormous, chaotic, and yet I freely admit that I immediately fell for Florence's charms.

More a large town than a true city, Florence is still comprised of individual districts, each with its artisan workshops, local markets, small squares and alleyways, in addition to the areas swarming with tourists. Thanks to friends I met there—and, some years later, to love—I discovered a city that I'd not known prior. And I fell in love with it.

I challenge anyone to resist the allure of Piazzale Michelangelo, or San Miniato al Monte, with all of Florence stretched out before you as the Arno River glistens below, as it does in every season and every moment of the day.

Florence was so many things to me. Wandering its streets with a gelato in hand, or exploring its traditional tripe and lampredotto vendors with all manner of people in line: students, workers and tourists. Florence with its central landmark, the Duomo, its historic cafés and evenings spent along the Arno.

It was Florence's markets, however, that ultimately won me over. Drawn in by the colors and aromas, at first I would follow the trail of scents, of ripe late-spring strawberries or porcini mushrooms from the autumn woods. But then I would get to talking with vendors, their lively eyes behind heaps of fruits and vegetables, who were always happy to share their tales and their recipes.

Located just outside the San Lorenzo and Sant'Ambrogio indoor markets—true Florentine institutions—these neighborhood outdoor farmers markets remain the beating heart of this city. Every morning, in every season, they slowly come to life at the break of day, attracting locals to shop for fruit, vegetables, tripe, salt cod, fresh ricotta and more. Then there's the market at Florence's Piazza delle Cure, near the soccer stadium—one of my favorites. At this market I learned how to make minestrone, while listening in as some produce vendors chattered on. Some of Florence's more noteworthy squares come to life once a month with local organic markets, starting with the Fierucola market in Santissima Annunziata on the first weekend of the month. Each market day highlights a different product: wool, honey, bread, oil. The third Sunday of the month sees the organic market in Piazza Santo Spirito, while come the first Saturday of the month, Piazza della Repubblica plays hosts to its farmers market, with producers coming in from the Florentine countryside to sell vegetables, organic wine, cheese and honey.



## *Pappa al pomodoro*

Whenever I think of comfort food, the kind that like a warm and soft embrace always makes me feel better, I think of *pappa al pomodoro*.

This, too, is a dish my grandmother used to make, following her characteristically Sienese recipe: pale in color, with just a few pieces of tomato here and there to flavor while cooking. My first act of cooking rebellion, in fact, was the making of a Florentine-style *pappa al pomodoro*, which I'd learned from my friend Emanuela. The Florentine version calls for a mince and tomato purée, resulting in a more vibrant red color, different from my grandmother's version.

Cooking class after cooking class, summer after summer, I finally settled on my own *panzanella* recipe, a blend of the Florentine and the Sienese—just like me, and just like Val d'Elsa.

Then came my greatest success: the moment my grandmother tasted it. A few days later she told me that finally I had learned how to make a proper *panzanella*, and that it was her favorite version.

### *Ingredients for 4 people*

800 g (1 & ¾ lb) ripe tomatoes  
2 garlic cloves  
dried chili pepper  
1 cup extra virgin olive oil  
4 thick slices of stale Tuscan bread  
about 20 basil leaves  
salt

*Pappa al pomodoro* will turn out much smoother if you peel the tomatoes (and you won't be left with bits of tomato skin in your teeth). Plunge the tomatoes into a large pot of boiling water for 30 seconds. Remove them quickly and transfer to a bowl of cold water. The skin will come away easily.

Cover the bottom of a pot with oil. Finely chop the garlic and sauté in the pot along with with dried chili to taste. Chop the peeled tomatoes and add to the pot. Cook on low heat until the tomatoes begin to soften and come apart.

Meanwhile, soak the bread in cold water, then remove and thoroughly wring out the excess water. Add the bread to the tomato along with a cup of water. (Here some people add broth instead of water, but in my family we've stuck to the simpler version with water.)

Adjust for salt. Cook on medium heat for about 10 minutes, stirring vigorously from time to time with a whisk to obtain its characteristic creamy, smooth texture.

Remove from the heat, tear in the basil leaves and drizzle with the remaining olive oil.

Let the *pappa al pomodoro* rest for at least an hour, after which you can reheat it on low if you wish to serve it warm. Otherwise serve at room temperature.

## The Christmas Market in Siena


In summertime, come Saturday nights we used to sit down in Piazza del Campo with a gelato. I could feel the warmth from the sun-baked bricks below me. It was like being at the center of the world, with those historic palaces lit up from all sides and the contrada flags flying during the Palio horserace. In those moments I felt this piazza could not have been lovelier. But I was wrong.

For some years now, Piazza del Campo has seen the revival of its grand historic weekly market, with roots in the 13th century.

During one of the first weekends in December, the square fills up with stands decorated with flickering lights and creating a mercantile feel of days long gone. This is one of the loveliest Christmas markets around, featuring traditional agricultural products and locally crafted artisan goods.

Each vendor tries to tempt you to taste their wares, like a scene straight out of an imaginary medieval market. The large wheels of Pienza pecorino and Sieneese pecorino cheeses on display brighten the scene with various shades of brown-, ochre- and red-colored rinds. Strung sausage links hang above the heads of vendors, who in the meantime are busy slicing their cured prosciutto by hand.

The smell of cured meats competes with the aroma of spices from the *panforte*, *panpepato*, *cavallucci* and *ricciarelli*. The unrivaled stars of this market, traditional Sieneese Christmas desserts, are rooted in the apothecary workshops and the homes of wealthy merchants here in the Middle Ages.




WHERE: Piazza del Campo, Siena.

WHEN: One of the first weekends in December.

NOT TO MISS: The Cinta Senese cured meats from Spannocchia Farm.

OUTSIDE THE MARKET: Founded in 1879, Antica Drogheria Manganelli on Via di Città makes Sieneese *panforte* according to an ancient recipe. Here you will find all the spices needed to make *panforte* at home, together with ingredients used in many other traditional Sieneese desserts.





## *Tiramisù con la China* *Tiramisù with China Italian Bitter Liqueur*

Just down the road from Piazza Medicea is Farmacia Clementi, an old-fashioned pharmacy providing standard services while simultaneously reflecting a true piece of Fivizzano history. Some old-time touches include splendid wooden window displays of medicinal herbs, spices, extracts, tablets and curative mixtures.

The most precious product available here, however, is the famous China Clementi, a tonic and digestive elixir created in 1884 as an antimalarial medicine, made from two prized varieties of tropical China (*Cinchona Calisaya* and the rare *Succirubra*) along with other aromatic and medicinal herbs.

The Italian journalist Indro Montanelli, who was very fond of China Clementi, wrote that for him it was like “a delightful memory, a return to the good, real things of my childhood.”

Today it is still made according to the same craft method and 19th-century recipe, sought by famous bartenders the world over for special cocktails.

At the Four Seasons in Florence, for example, Luca Angeli uses it for his “Old Style Negroni,” which calls for Beefeater Gin, China Clementi, Carpano Antica Formula vermouth, orange zest and amarena (black cherry) liqueur.

I mix it with coffee and include it in my favorite dessert, tiramisù. If you cannot find China, substitute with the walnut liqueur *nocino* or a coffee liqueur.

### *Ingredients for 6 people*

2 eggs, whites and yolks separated  
2 tbsp sugar  
250 g (9 oz) mascarpone  
200 ml ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup) brewed coffee  
6 tbsp China or other liqueur  
100 g (3 &  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz) ladyfinger cookies  
50 g (1 &  $\frac{3}{4}$  oz) dark chocolate  
unsweetened cocoa powder

Beat the yolks with the sugar until white and fluffy. Rub a bit of the cream between your fingers. It's ready when you no longer feel the grains of sugar.

Add the mascarpone and 2 tbsp of China (or other liqueur). Mix well to remove any lumps.

Beat the egg whites until stiff and gradually fold them into the mascarpone cream.

Finely chop the dark chocolate.

Combine the coffee and 4 tbsp of China in a bowl.

Prepare the tiramisù by alternating layers of the ladyfingers (after briefly dipping in the liquid), the mascarpone cream and the chopped chocolate.

Finish with a top layer of the mascarpone cream and a dusting of unsweetened cocoa powder. Let the tiramisù rest in the fridge for a few hours before serving.

## Zuppa di farro della Garfagnana

### Garfagnana Spelt Soup

Spelt is one of the oldest grains cultivated by man, known since the 7th century B.C. in Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt and Palestine. It later became a staple food among Latin populations, who used the flour to make polenta and focaccia breads.

This protein- and vitamin-rich grain is a slow release energy food. For this reason it was prized among the Roman military. It was spelt, in fact, not iron, that facilitated the Roman conquest of the world and the creation of an empire! With the introduction of other grain varieties, however, spelt wheat cultivation gradually disappeared, with the exception of some few areas that have carried on the tradition.

Spelt has been cultivated in Tuscany since time immemorial, and continuously so in Garfagnana, where nearly 100 farms produce the Garfagnana IGP variety—a unique product that reflects the significant relationship of land, climate and altitude. It's the base ingredient of many recipes from the *cucina povera* tradition (meaning “poor” or peasant cooking), such as spelt soup, spelt with beans and sweet spelt tart.

The spelt soup of Garfagnana seems to have come straight out of the pages of history. This unique, flavorful and well-balanced dish typically calls for a local variety of bean, such *lo scritto* (red and white), but you can use cannellini or borlotti beans instead.

#### Ingredients for 6 people

250 g (½ lb) red beans from Lucca  
(or other)  
1/2 red onion  
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
50 g (1 & ¾ oz) pancetta  
350 g (10 & ½ oz) spelt  
500 g (just over 1 lb) potatoes  
a few sage leaves  
salt  
pepper

Soak the beans overnight in a bowl of water.

Dry the beans the next day. Finely chop the onion with the pancetta. Transfer the mince to a large, heavy bottom pot with a few tablespoons of olive oil and cook on low for a few minutes. When the onion has softened, add the drained beans. Combine well and pour in at least 2 l of water (just over 4 pints). Add a pinch of salt but not too much. You will adjust for salt later. Simmer uncovered on low heat for about an hour. Peel and roughly cube the potatoes and add to the pot along with the spelt and a few sage leaves. Cook on low for another hour, until the soup becomes thick and creamy. Add small amounts of hot water as needed, should the soup become dry. Now adjust for salt, if needed, and serve with a drizzle of olive oil and freshly ground black pepper.





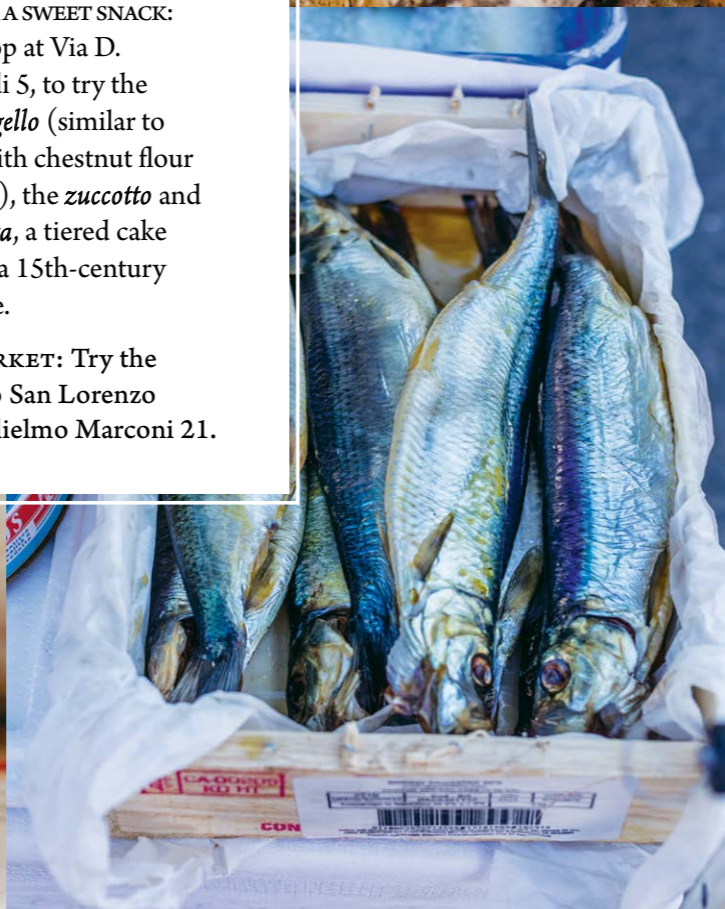
## Four Biscotti Recipes

The word *biscotto* means “baked twice” in Italian, a perfectly apt description of how these cookies are made.

Today, Prato almond cookies are called either biscotti or *cantucci*. Yet in the past these two types of cookies were rather different, despite their shared baking method. The idea of cooking baked goods twice was a response to an important demand, that of conserving bread and other products for long periods. The earliest cookies date to the Roman era, prepared with barley, honey and wine. Later, biscotti transformed into different varieties, thanks to spices and dried fruit made available by commercial exchange with The East. And it was introduction of sugar in the 13th century that would ultimately launch a revolution in pastry making.

During this time period, *cantucci* acquired their identity, as strips of bread spiced with anise and fennel seeds, cut lengthwise and baked a second time in the oven. This everyday cookie would be dunked in sweet wine, and was thought to possess invigorating and other qualities that would “sort out” the stomach.

The almond biscotti known as *bisshotelli* are baked in the same manner, but with different ingredients. These were considered the so-called “sweet table” desserts, always on hand in homes of a certain status. And they were costlier and more refined, given the use of not only almonds but also egg, an ingredient that would have classified them immediately as a luxury item. In 1858, Antonio Mattei opened his biscotti factory in Prato, at Via Ricasoli 11. The Mattei bakery made great quantities of spiced *cantucci* and almond biscotti, which together with the significant national and international recognition they received earned the label “biscotti of Prato.” In 1908 the bakery passed to the Pandolfini family, who after three generations of business continue to produce wonderful biscotti that taste of home and tradition, following the original recipe developed by Antonio Mattei in 1858. It’s not easy to pinpoint a specific recipe, as variations abound, each fiercely guarded by bakers, writers and families alike.



## Borgo San Lorenzo

Borgo San Lorenzo's weekly market coincides with the Mugello farmers market. Here you'll find a selection of local seasonal fruits and vegetables, everything from potatoes for *tortelli* to mushrooms and chestnuts.

A range of local sheep and cow milk cheeses is also on offer. Yet the absolute must-see is the tripe vendor from Florence with its aromas of *lampredotto*, tripe, *nervetti* (tendons), *musetto* (sausage made from various pig's head pieces), *matrice* (boiled cow uterus) and *poppa* (cured cow udder).

The liveliest stand is CAF, the Farmers' Cooperative of Fiorenzuola, and not only on account of the entertaining and jovial butcher. All the meats sold here come from cows, sheep and pigs raised by the members of the Cooperative who guarantee the highest quality of all their cuts. Naturally, you will find classic cuts like Florentine t-bone steak and fillets, along with *musetto* sausage and *guancia* (cheek) for traditional slow-cooked dishes. CAF also sells honeys, grains, legumes, fresh pasta and cured meats.

Browsing the homewares stands you'll find pasta cutters for making *tortelli*, stuffed pasta similar to ravioli.

Ask around for the best place to eat Mugello *tortelli*. The list of options will be long, yet the names that come up most frequently are da Giorgione in Sagginale, the Casa del Prosciutto in Ponte a Vicchio, and the bar and pizzeria Valeri in Luco di Mugello. Otherwise, another option is to head to one of the local *sagre* (food fairs) held in small towns throughout the area. The *sagra* custom sees local women coming together to work, forming an assembly line to produce shocking amounts of *tortelli* that are then readily (and quickly) consumed by local residents, tourists and Florentines fleeing the city heat.

In Borgo San Lorenzo you can also purchase pre-made *tortelli* at Pastificio San Lorenzo.

Note that asking a Mugello local how to make *tortelli* is akin to asking her to reveal the secrets of the Holy Grail. The base ingredient is always potato, yet the rest varies, from those who add garlic or parsley to those who swear that a hint of tomato paste or spoonful of meat sauce is needed for the filling. In Palazzuolo sul Senio the custom is to add a bit of ricotta, a bold touch that reflects the influence of neighboring Romagna. The most memorable I've tried were filled with potato, leek, garlic and cheese.

*Tortelli* are typically served with a hearty meat ragù, wild boar sauce or frog meat sauce. But at a *sagra* you will also see them served with butter and sage, pesto or tomato sauce.

**WHERE:** nel centro di Borgo San Lorenzo.

**WHEN:** Tuesday mornings from 8am to 1pm.

**NOT TO MISS:** The meats at the CAF Farmers Cooperative of Fiorenzuola.

**WHERE TO EAT:** Stop by Passaguai located at Piazza Garibaldi 2, a central locale that's restaurant, enoteca, cocktail bar and deli.

**WHERE TO STOP FOR A SWEET SNACK:** Aurelio's pastry shop at Via D. Partigiana Garibaldi 5, to try the *panmarrone del Mugello* (similar to panettone, made with chestnut flour and marrons glacés), the *zuccotto* and the *torta in balconata*, a tiered cake made according to a 15th-century Medici court recipe.

**OUTSIDE THE MARKET:** Try the tortelli at Pastificio San Lorenzo located at Via Guglielmo Marconi 21.



## Tagliatelle con il piccione in umido

### Tagliatelle with Stewed Pigeon

Eating at La Carabaccia trattoria in Volterra is like eating at home, a bit like having lunch with that aunt who spends an entire morning over the stove and always serves impeccable dishes—dishes that require time and patience and that taste of home. You feel welcome here, like part of an extended family.

If it's the right time of year, try the *migliacci*, sugar-dusted crêpes made with a pork broth batter. That's right—pork broth made with pig bones and herbs. The final product bears a mere hint of pork flavor, yet even in its subtlety, it's a flavor that conjures up the traditions of our ancestors and their customary pig slaughtering.

Aside from *migliacci*, another fabulous dish here is the tagliatelle with stewed pigeon, made according to the following recipe.

#### Ingredients for 4 people

##### For the first cooking of the pigeon

2 pigeons, each weighing about 300 g  
(10 & ½ oz)  
4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
3 garlic cloves  
a few sage leaves  
½ cup vinsanto  
½ cup warm water

##### For the stew

1 carrot  
1 celery stalk  
½ red onion  
2 garlic cloves  
a few sage leaves  
2 bay leaves  
4 juniper berries  
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil  
1 tbsp tomato paste  
600 ml (2 & ½ cups) vegetable broth  
salt

Over the open stove, burn any remaining fine feathers off the pigeons' skin. Cut the pigeons into uniform pieces and place in a pan with the oil, garlic and bay leaves. Brown on medium heat for about 15 minutes.

Once the meat is browned, add the vinsanto and reduce. Add the warm water as soon as the wine has evaporated. Cook off all the liquid over low heat and let cool.

Bone the pigeons and transfer the meat on a cutting board. Pound the meat into small pieces with a knife.

Make a mince of the carrot, celery, onion, garlic, sage, bay leaf and juniper berries and put in a pan with the oil.

Cook on low heat for 5 minutes. Salt and add the chopped pigeon meat and tomato paste. Combine well to flavor. Pour in the vegetable broth and cook on low heat, stirring often, for about 40 minutes, until you have a thick and flavorful sauce similar to a meat ragù. Combine the pigeon sauce with the cooked tagliatelle and serve.



# Triglie alla livornese

## Livorno Style Mullet

This is a traditional Jewish dish.

Livorno was once a carriage-free port town which welcomed Jews as it did people of every nationality and background. The freedoms guaranteed by the Livorno Constitution to whomever came to this city extended to the Jews as well. Here they were not confined to ghettos, nor subjected to other limitations or humiliations.

Expelled by Christian Spain, they arrived in Livorno carrying a few tomato plants, where they taught the local population—and then the rest of the country—how to cook with tomato.

Thus many traditional Livornese dishes are rich with red tomato, dishes ranging from *cacciucco* fish soup to pan-cooked mullet. The mullets used here are red mullets, those with the shimmery, reddish-purple color—a color called *amaranto* in Italian. Interestingly, *Amaranto* is also the name of the Livorno soccer team, as celebrated in the 1930s as the red mullet of Livorno.

Smaller mullets, those weighing less than 100 g, are very good for frying. They often end up in the typical mix of fish used in a fish fry. Those weighing 100 g can also be used in tomato sauces—the Livornese tomato sauce, to be precise. Those weighing 200 or 300 g are good for cooking en *papillote*, while those even larger can be grilled.

Technically speaking, the recipe here for Livornese style red mullet is an economical one, yet its sauce is one of the most flavorful you can imagine. One whiff of its aroma will have your mouth watering. Don't overlook the bread, a fundamental accompaniment to this dish.

### Ingredients for 4 people

8 red mullets, each weighing about 100 g  
(3 & ½ oz)  
extra virgin olive oil  
1 small bunch fresh parsley + more for  
garnishing  
2 garlic cloves  
500 g (just over 1 lb) peeled tomatoes  
salt  
red chili pepper (to taste)  
fresh bread

Start by rinsing the fish well, then scaling and gutting them. Set the fish aside once they are rinsed and dried.  
Finely chop the 2 garlic cloves together with the parsley. Cover the bottom of a large pan with oil and add the mince. Cook until the garlic begins to sizzle.  
Purée the peeled tomatoes and add to the pan as soon as the garlic begins to brown. Adjust for salt and chili pepper and cook for about 10 minutes on low heat to create a thick, flavorful sauce (the best part of this dish).  
Add the fish to the pan, carefully arranging them side by side. Cook on low for about 10 minutes, without turning them. Red mullet is a delicate fish that shouldn't be touched while cooking. Simply cover them from time to time with the sauce.  
Finish with a dusting of the fresh parsley and serve with plenty of fresh bread, as half the pleasure of this dish is dipping a chunk of bread into the wonderful sauce.





## *Cinghiale alla maremmana* *Maremma Style Wild Boar*

The Maremma has long been a hunting and game area, going back to the time of the Etruscans, who would lure animals into their nets by playing double flutes. Wild boar is likely the most recognized and emblematic animal known to this region, a symbol of the Natural Park of Maremma and the L'Uccellina, a stretch of wild, pure land with hills covered in Mediterranean maquis—humid and full of marshlands and swamps, as well as pine groves, sandy beaches, dunes and sea cliffs.

The boar also plays a role in mysterious local legends, figuring as a kind of mythical creature of ever-larger size capable of winning the esteem of the hunters who seek to capture him.

Wild boar is also the star of the countless food festivals that light up inland and coastal Maremma in summer and fall.

This recipe for Maremma style boar is from Ilena, who suggests not marinating the meat, as this strips the meat of its gamey flavor, along with that mythical quality which rendered it for so long the center of fireside tales. The walnut added during cooking seems to help absorb that hint of wildness that remains, making it palatable to everyone.

### *Ingredients for 4 people*

800 g (1 & ¾ lb) boned boar meat  
extra virgin olive oil  
2 garlic cloves  
4 bay leaves  
2 sprigs rosemary  
dried chili pepper  
½ cup red wine vinegar  
1 cup red wine  
500 g (just over 1 lb) peeled tomatoes  
200 ml (¾ cup) tepid water  
1 walnut  
salt

Break the boar meat into pieces roughly the size of a walnut. Cover the bottom of a large pot with olive oil. Add the garlic cloves, the bay leaves, the rosemary and chili pepper. Heat on medium and brown the meat for about 10 minutes, until all sides are browned.

Pour the vinegar over the meat and reduce. Add the red wine and cook off the liquid on low heat. This will take about 20 to 25 minutes.

Break up the tomatoes and add to the pot along with the water. Add the walnut. Adjust for salt and cook slowly on very low heat for at least 1 and ½ hours, adding additional water as needed. You should have a thick sauce, and the boar meat should be tender. Serve as a main course or as a sauce for tagliatelle, accompanied by a nice grating of pecorino cheese.



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