



A Taste of Ancient Rome

By Ilaria Gozzini Giacosa

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From appetizers to desserts, the rustic to the refined, here are more than two hundred recipes from ancient Rome tested and updated for today's tastes. With its intriguing sweet-sour flavor combinations, its lavish use of fresh herbs and fragrant spices, and its base in whole grains and fruits and vegetables, the cuisine of Rome will be a revelation to serious cooks ready to create new dishes in the spirit of an ancient culture.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Neither an update for modern palates nor an anthropological study, this engrossing collection reproduces a two-thousand-year-old cuisine to "tempt the reader to explore some appetizing dishes from forgotten historical sources."⁴ Relying primarily on the writings of Apicius, Cato, Coumella, Juvenal, Martial and Petroniussics , Giacosa recalls the foods and practices of the Roman meal, or cena , the banquet and the tavern. Though established centuries before the introduction of the tomato, eggplant or pasta, ancient Roman cuisine depended on some elements familiar to modern Italian cooking: eggs, vegetables, fish and poultry. Less familiar elements included dormice (served stuffed), thrushes (served roasted) and the widely used sun-fermented fish-based sauce called garum . The 200 recipes here for such representative selections as seasoned mussels and duck in prune sauce are offered in their original Latin and in English; Giocosa also provides additional instructions, as for stuffing pigeons, or substitutions for ingredients like silphium, which is no longer available. The dozens of line drawings of ancient foodstuffs and color plates of Pompeian taverns and food shops complete this culinary portrait. Useful for food historians, a treat for food buffs, the book takes a welcome new look at the origins of a familiar cuisine. Illustrations not seen by PW.

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From Library Journal

Here are two specialized books dealing with bygone cuisines, each with its own particular sort of fascination. Molokhovets's book was first published in 1861 but revised by the author up through 1917, thus spanning an important era in Russian history. Her compendium was a sort of Fannie Farmer or Mrs. Beeton's that became essential for young Russian housewives. (Indeed, it was credited with saving families that otherwise would have been destroyed by "drunkenness and loose living.") Toomre, a well-known culinary historian, has done an impressive job of presenting Molokhovets's work, providing a lengthy introduction to set the stage and annotations to put the recipes in context. A glimpse into another world that should interest cultural and culinary historians alike. Giacosa's unusual book goes back a bit earlier. Combining her scholarly training in archaeology and her interest in food, she presents a lively portrait of ancient Rome and its culinary practices. She has culled recipes from Apicius and other contemporary sources and made them accessible to adventurous modern cooks. As she presents it, the Roman kitchen seems surprisingly sophisticated, with a reliance on lots of fresh herbs, a taste for sweet and sour combinations, and dishes made with foie gras, truffles, and other "refined" ingredients. In fact, Giacosa also includes related modern recipes from the same region for comparison. Well written and engaging despite its narrow scope, Giacosa's book is recommended for special collections.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Julia Faulkner:

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