



GIORGIO FRANCHETTI

DINING WITH THE ANCIENT ROMANS

HISTORY, DAILY LIFE AND NUMEROUS RECIPES
TO DISCOVER THE EATING HABITS
OF OUR CULTURAL ANCESTORS

WITH ARCHAEO-COOK
CRISTINA CONTE

ENGLISH VERSION BY
CANDACE MARUGANE

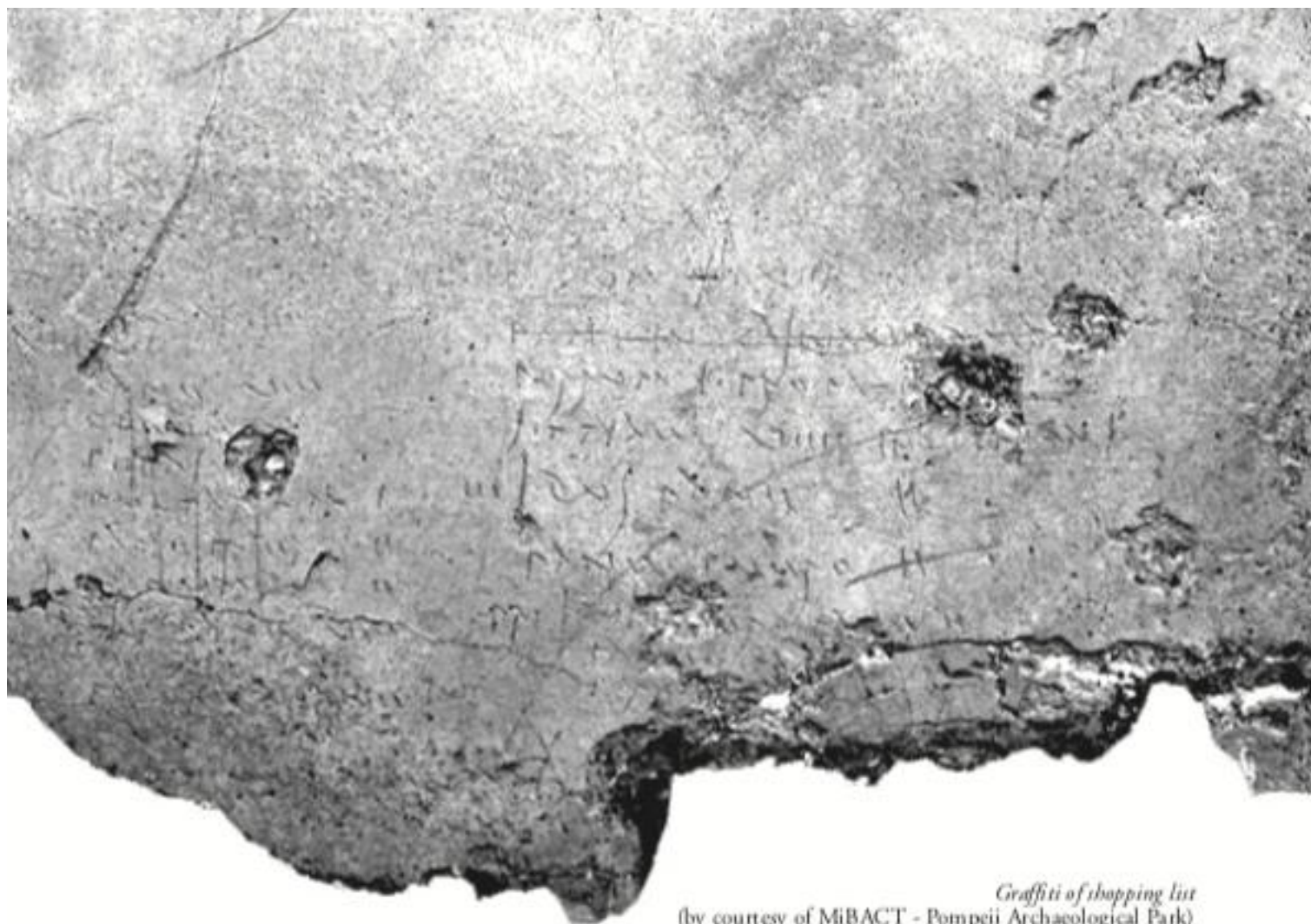

Edizioni **Efesto**





*Famous mosaic of the skull and the wheel with reference to death, from Pompeii
(by courtesy of MiBACT - National Archaeological Museum of Naples)*

people and therefore more opportunities to do business. For instance, the baths, the forum, or the crossroads of the main roads. It is not by chance that around these crowded places *popinae*, *cauponae*, and *thermopolia* were plentiful; it was not even always necessary to actually go to these places in order to buy food; in fact, the owners of these inns often sent their slaves and servants to sell either hot or cold food, depending on the season, on the



Graffiti of shopping list
(by courtesy of MiBACT - Pompeii Archaeological Park)

Greeks and the Egyptians certainly did not do any differently. The “proof” is represented in the graffiti which was found, once again, in Pompeii, at the Hostel of Fabi, Memor and Celer¹.

The hostel was large and also provided a range of services. The entrance, fauces, and the atrium, had walls painted with a red background, that still remain in some places. The hostel had an entrance hall, kitchen, two triclinium halls available to customers who could rent them for their private banquets or weddings, as we have seen, and several *cubicula* intended for overnight stays. There was a *caupona* and at number 24, the next number of the street to which the hostel was adjoined, a *thermopolium*. In the atrium, graffiti was found engraved on the plaster of the wall, where an unknown client wrote an elaborate shopping list which had been carried out in the span of eight consecutive days.

The graffiti is inscribed with (in brackets the grammatical additions to abbreviations and some incorrect letters that have been corrected):

¹ Regio IX, Insula 7, 24.25.



Cup in silver from the treasure of the House of Menander, Pompeii
(by courtesy of MiBACT – National Archaeological Museum of Naples)

SAUCEPAN

It was a bronze or silver utensil that had a bowl with a flat handle. However, its use has not yet been completely revealed because none of the saucepans which were found in Pompeii have signs of blackening from fire. An interesting fact is that saucepans were virtually the only tin-plated containers and were among the very few branded utensils. An interesting theory is that the contained food could somehow react with the bronze and it is for this reason these saucepans were tin-plated. Silver ones arrived in the first century and were used during the banquets, it is not by chance that the rich decorations of vine shoots, shells, animals or even, as in the treasure of the House of Menander, a head of Medusa²⁰ appear at that time.

SMALL BOWL

It was a bronze container, small in size, so small that the opening had a diameter of 8 cm and its height was approximately 5 cm. The acetabulum is also included in this category of banquet utensils, it was a cup that was

²⁰ Lucia Birzio Piroli Stefanelli, *op.cit.*, 72, cat. n. 79, fig. 146; Suzanne Tassinari, *op. cit.*, G; Maria Rosa Scarcelli, *op. cit.*, 35, fig. 14.

and was destroyed in a different way according to the various votive rituals that served to ingratiate themselves at the crowded and variegated Hellenic Pantheon. As we have already said in the previous chapters, the Romans became familiar with bread late compared to the start of their civilization, in the 3rd century B.C., through contact with the Greek world. Pliny, talked about the cultivation of wheat and wrote: “*Varro states that the grains are fully formed in thirty-six days and are ready for reaping after eight months*”¹, a loaf which was divided into eight portions by four linear cuts made into the crust. We find the same bread in Paleo-Christian sources, with two or three cuts that tried to symbolize the cross or even the Christogram, in order to preserve the most hidden symbol. They became known as *quadratus* precisely because of these cuts, as the segments were called *quadrae*. We have already seen that spelt was the most popular cereal for the Romans and it was also the first to be used: its grains were toasted to eliminate the chaff and then they were ground to get the *farrina*, hence



Bread loaf from Ercolana in the Vesuvian area
(by courtesy of MiBACT – National Archaeological Museum of Naples)

¹ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, XVIII, 56.



APPENDIX 3

EURYSACES AND MODESTUS

Bakers of 2000 years ago

Eurysaces, rich Roman baker

The freedman *Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces* was not only a Roman baker, but also a bread supplier for Rome, seeing as he had contracts with the State, and thanks to the aforementioned *collegium pistorum*, a kind of order or corporation of bakers, he had managed to make his fortune. We learned of this thanks to his funeral monument, today in Porta Maggiore.



Tomb of Eurysaces, Rome

A4 – *Cardui* - Cardoons*Apicio, De Re Coquinaria, III, 19, 1*

Ingredients:

Cardoons	5
Eggs	3
Oil	2 <i>cyathi</i>
<i>Liquamen</i>	1 <i>cyathus</i>

"Cardoons are eaten with a dressing of briny broth, oil, and chopped hard eggs"

Clean and chop the cardoons, also known as artichoke thistles. Hard boil the eggs and chop them. Mix the oil and the *liquamen* to make a sauce. Place the eggs on the serving plate with the cardoons on top of them and dress with the sauce.

**A5 – *Intuba* - Endives and Lettuce***Apicio, De Re Coquinaria, III, 18, 1*

Ingredients:

Endives	5 plants
Onion	2
Oil	2 <i>cyathi</i>
<i>Liquamen</i>	1 <i>cyathus</i>

"Endives are dressed with brine, a little oil and chopped onion"

Clean the endives, then boil and drain. Leave to cool and pour on the ingredients, which have been mixed together thoroughly beforehand. Serve with a sliced onion.



B11 – *Minutal marinum* - A Mince of Sea Food*Apicius, De Re Coquinaria, IV, 3, 1***Ingredients:**

Rockfish	2 kilos
<i>Liquamen</i>	1-2 abundant <i>cyathi</i> (see explanation)
Pepper	1 three-fingered pinch
Oil	2 <i>cyathi</i>
Leeks	2
Lovage	1 fistful
Coriander	1 three-fingered pinch
Wine	2 <i>cyathi</i>
Oregano	1 three-fingered pinch
Maltagliati di pasta	200 grams

"Place the fish in sauce pan, add broth oil and wine and poach it. Also, finely chop leek heads (the white part only of leeks) and fresh coriander. When cool, mince the fish fine form it into small cakes adding capers and sea-nettles well cleaned. These fish cakes cook in a liquor of pepper, lovage and origary, crushed, diluted with broth and the above fish liquor which skim well, bind with roux or eggs, stir, strain over the cakes, sprinkle with pepper and serve"

Take the bigger fish, clean well, slice them and put them to the side for now. Place the smaller fish in a terracotta casserole dish and cook in oil until golden brown, add wine and simmer until it is reduced. Add sliced leeks, lovage, pepper and oregano. Pour in the *liquamen*. Simmer on a low heat, strain and then put back on the heat and bring to a boil. Place the bigger fish in the pot. Apicius wrote about "sea nettles" however they are basically unobtainable, a retailer specializing in Chinese food could possibly supply you with seaweed which could substitute it, we will leave it up to you. This ingredient certainly increases the saltiness of the dish therefore do not exaggerate with the *liquamen*. In other words, if you find the seaweed use only 1 *cyathus* of *liquamen*, otherwise 2 abundant ones as indicated. Ultimately, we have not mentioned it in the ingredients. Add some strips of fresh pasta to the soup, made with flour and water which you can cut into strips similar to "maltagliati" and simmer until cooked.

**B11**

C8 – *In polypo - Polypus**Apicius, De Re Coquinaria, IX, 5, 1*

Ingredients:

Octopus	1
Garlic	2 cloves
<i>Liquamen</i>	1 <i>cyathus</i>
Pepper	1 three-fingered pinch

"Cook with pepper, lovage, broth, laser, ginger and serve"

Clean the octopus, beat it in order to tenderise it and then wash it carefully. Bring to the boil in salted water and then leave to simmer. Drain, cut into pieces and place on a serving plate. Mix garlic, liquamen, pepper and oil. Pour the sauce all over the octopus.

**C9 – *Patina de pisce lupo - Sea Pike****Apicius, De Re Coquinaria, IV, 2, 32*

Ingredients:

Pike	1
Cumin	1 fistful
Parsley	1 fistful
Rue	1 three-fingered pinch
Pepper	1 three-fingered pinch
Onion	one half
Honey	2 <i>cyathi</i>
Raisin wine	2 <i>cyathi</i>
<i>Liquamen</i>	2 <i>cyathi</i>
Oil	1 <i>cyathus</i>

"Grind pepper, cumin, parsley, rue, onions, honey, broth, raisin wine and drops of oil"

Clean the pike thoroughly and place it in a terracotta casserole dish together with a sauce made of ground pepper, cumin, rue, and parsley, finely chopped onion all blended together with oil, honey, raisin wine and *liquamen*. Simmer. Serve hot.