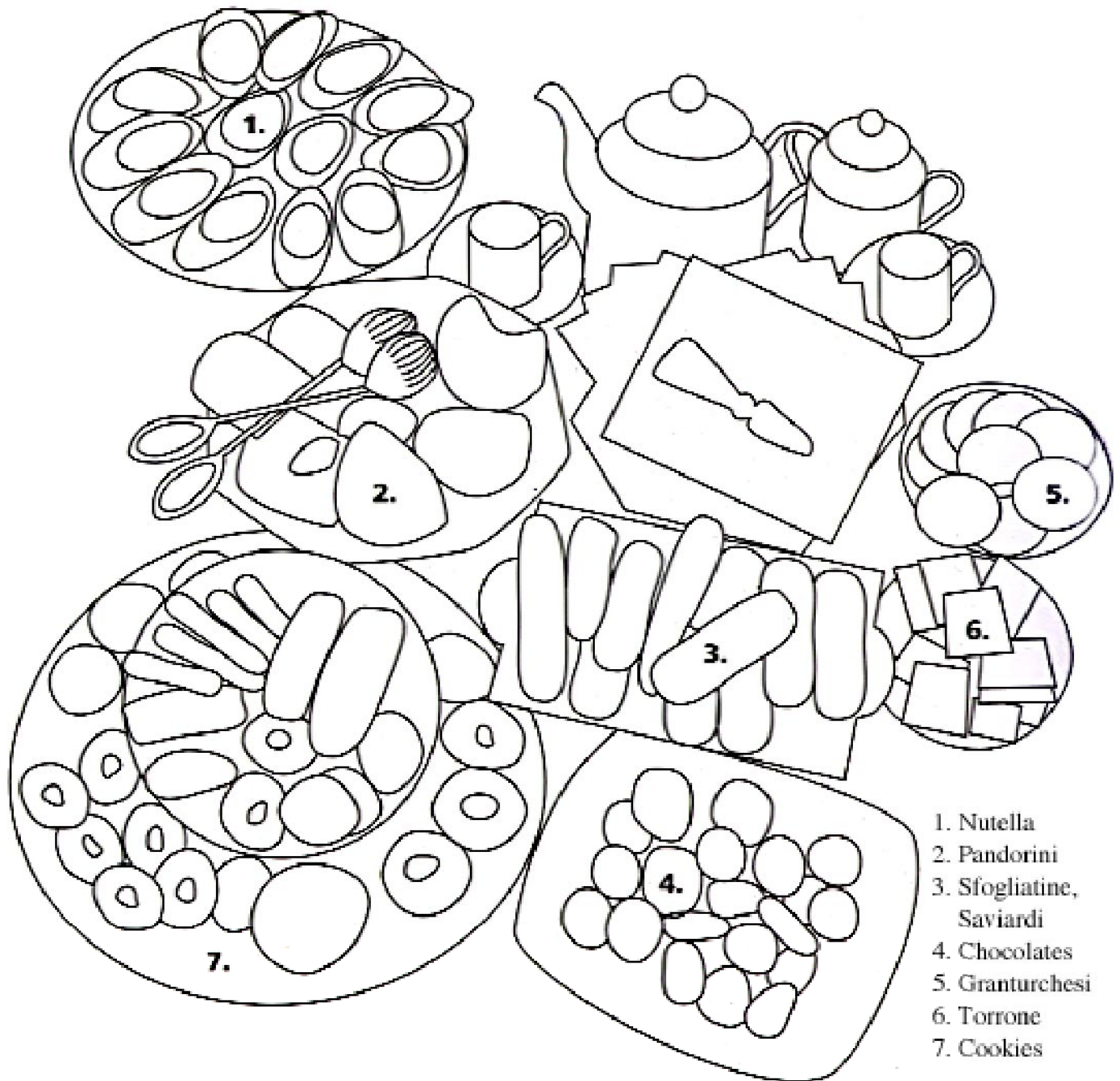


Dolce Italia

Dolce Italia
The Quality of Life.





Discovering the Sweet Side of Italian Life

A tour of Italy is as pleasant a way as any to discover or learn more about Italian pastries, biscuits, candies and cakes, just as an exploration of the universe of Italian confectionery provides numerous insights into the history, culture, customs and habits of the Italians themselves. It is a long history that really began when the first professional bakers appeared in Rome around the beginning of the third century BC. Passing references to confectionery by ancient writers give only a summary idea of the assortment of sweets enjoyed by the Romans. However, the implements, equipment and layout of bakers' and confectioners' shops and workrooms uncovered at Pompeii and Herculaneum outside Naples, as well as the "mummified" remains of some of the pastries and loaves themselves, suggest that the range of specialties was almost as broad as a modern shopper expects to find in a reasonably well-stocked store.

That demand was strong is proved by a monument near the main railroad station in Rome. The structure has been severely damaged during the last 2,000 years but it is still impressive and somewhat mystifying. Probably few if any of the millions of travelers who have no doubt glimpsed it as their trains pulled into or left the station have any idea what it is or represents. Only the top of its white stone facade can be seen above the surrounding buildings and that part is pierced at regular intervals by round holes arranged in a rectangular band. The holes represent the openings of an ancient oven, for the monument is or was the tomb of Vergilius Eurysaces, a baker, and his wife, Atinia.

A frieze at the very top of the facade, invisible to train passengers, illustrates the making and baking of bread and other goods. It is clear from the size and elaborate character of his tomb and its position, near one of the main gates in the walls of ancient Rome, that Eurysaces was not ashamed of his connection with what was often scorned as a menial occupation and that baking was a lucrative business.

Once established, the confectionery tradition never faltered in Italy. The Empire fell and the country dissolved into numerous small and quarrelsome states. Pastry-making continued to flourish in each, although tastes and the bakers' and chefs' responses to them took different forms so that regional specialties developed. A surprisingly large number of them have survived and they have changed little over the centuries. Flat heavy cakes in which exotic spices were used lavishly, partly because those flavorings were extraordinarily scarce and expensive, were characteristic of the Middle Ages. The *Panforte* and *Panpepato* of Siena are direct descendants of those preparations.

Cakes and most pastries were dense and heavy in Roman times and the early Middle Ages because honey was the principal sweetener. Sweet preparations became lighter and more delicate when refined sugar was introduced into pastry-making - around the time the Renaissance was taking shape. Sugar had been known for centuries previously but it had been used almost exclusively as a medicine. Large-scale cultivation of sugar cane was initiated by the Arabs who ruled Sicily for 300 years, from the ninth through eleventh centuries. Sugar produced on the island and in other Arab-ruled lands in southern Europe and the Middle East passed along the trade routes northward from the Mediterranean.

Other ingredients were progressively added to an increasingly elaborate culinary tradition. Cherries, plums and peaches were transplanted to the west from the Middle East by the Romans, while citrons, oranges and lemons made their appearance in southern Europe shortly before the time of Christ, first as ornamental shrubs and trees and then as providers of fruit. The flavor and appeal of a whole host of traditional Italian pastries and confectionery products depends on the use of candied peel and marmalades. The growing taste for complex sweet preparations encouraged wider cultivation of hazelnuts, walnuts and especially almonds. Chocolate arrived from the New World in the 16th century and was soon playing a vital role in the making of pastries and confectionery. In the 17th century, coffee was introduced from Ethiopia, by way of the Middle East and Venice, and almost immediately became the favorite beverage of Italians and many other Europeans as well as an important flavoring.

Over a span of 2,000 years, Italian cooks and pastry chefs have shown remarkable versatility in adopting each ingredient and innovation as it came along and incorporating it in their distinctive culinary traditions. They have constantly developed new preparations, while at the same time retaining the essence of the old. Many Sicilian pastries betray, or proudly proclaim, their Arabic origins, delectable memorials of a time when Palermo was one of the richest and most highly civilized capitals in Europe. Other cities and regions of Italy perfected their own roster of specialties, creating an assortment of pastries and confectionery products that may be unequalled for breadth, variety and quality.



Amaretti

These small, crunchy almond cookies were said to have been created in 1718 at Saronno, to the east of the Lombard capital, to honor the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan when he made a formal visit to the town. Amaretti were almost certainly known and appreciated long

before the 18th century. The cookies made at Saronno were probably a more refined or tastier variation on an ancient theme. Because of the slightly bitterish edge to their flavor, which accounts for their name, they can be savored with a goblet of red wine. That touch of sharpness also makes them an ideal accompaniment to sweet preparations, like ice creams and fruits. They are used extensively in numerous desserts, both elaborate and simple, where they serve as the ideal foil to the sweetness of the other ingredients.



Cantuccini

Which came first, Cantuccini or Vin Santo? We will probably never know but we do know that Tuscans have been enjoying both, often together, since at least as early as the Middle Ages. The cookies contain toasted almonds and are further flavored

with anise. Some would describe them as crunchy but the fact is that they are hard, which means that they can be stored for an extended period without spoiling. While they can be eaten plain and alone, Cantuccini are best dipped first into a beverage, such as tea, coffee, milk or various types of wine in addition to Vin Santo. The cookies appear to have been invented at Prato, outside Florence. At least they have always been associated with that ancient center of the textile industry.

Colomba

Almonds and orange peel are the principal flavorings of the Colomba, a dove-shaped cake that is traditionally associated with the Easter season. According to one of various legends about the preparation's origin, the Longobard king Alboin was persuaded not to sacrifice a young maiden of Pavia, south of Milan, when she presented him the secret formula for the cake. The story is dubious, since Alboin lived in the 6th century, which was not exactly a period favorable to the development of the pastry-maker's art, especially in northern Italy. However, the cake is certainly tasty enough to serve as a maiden's ransom. The gold-crusted Colomba is soft and delicate and is delicious alone or accompanied by fruit of all kinds, creams and jams. In recent years, the bakers have added cream and chocolate fillings to create new variations.





Gianduiotti

The flavor of Gianduia or Gianduiotti is distinctive, a perfect blend of hazelnuts and chocolate. It is a specialty of Turin and the northwestern Italian region of Piedmont, where hazelnuts are extensively cultivated. Turin has long been a cosmopolitan city, welcoming influences and

ideas from north of the Alps as well as from southern Italy and the far shores of the Mediterranean. It adopted chocolate almost as soon as the Spanish conquistadores brought it to Europe from the New World and soon established a continent-wide reputation for the quality and variety of confectionery featuring that novel substance. Gianduia made its debut in Turin in 1852 and was an immediate success. In 1865, it received its name, which is that of a popular carnival mask depicting a character, Gianduia, who is something of an Italian Till Eulenspiegel or Paul Bunyan. This chocolate, made in small wedges and wrapped in gold foil, has a fine texture and elegant flavor.

Pandoro

Created in the 19th century in Verona, this light, spongy cake is still associated with Venice and its region, the Veneto, although it is now sold and enjoyed in all parts of Italy. The cake has a rich and delicate flavor and a fine texture. It is baked in a tall, star-shaped mold and the top is dusted with powdered sugar, which serves to highlight the stellar

motif and link the dessert with Christmas. It is true that Pandoro is a popular holiday-season treat but it is also consumed on other festive occasions throughout the year. The interior is rich, deep yellow in hue, which accounts for the cake's name, "golden bread." In the Italian tradition, no distinction was made linguistically between bread and cake. It is highly adaptable, since it can be served alone, with a goblet of sweetish to sweet sparkling wine, or split open, filled with marmalade or a pastry cream and reassembled. Or it can be coated with an innumerable variety of toppings.



Panettone

Many legends have been spun around this cake, a specialty of the bakers of Milan that over the centuries has become a favorite of Italians everywhere who believe no Christmas feast is complete without it. However, that does not stop them from enjoying it at other



times of the year as well. The stories about the cake's invention are somewhat farfetched and were obviously created expressly, in the absence of precise information, to explain the origins of a much-liked preparation. The Milanese were making it, although

probably in a somewhat different form, as long ago as the 15th century Panettone is a tall cake, for yeast is worked into the dough, and it is traditionally flavored with bits of candied fruit and raisins. In the last couple of decades, producers have introduced variations on the ancient formula through the addition of fillings of chocolate, cream or almonds. In one modern version, the cake is not only filled but also coated with chocolate. As with other cakes, Panettone can be consumed as a dessert at a meal or as a snack, accompanied by coffee, tea, sparkling or dessert wine. Toasted leftover slices make an excellent breakfast treat.



Panforte

The nuns of the Montecellesi convent are credited with the invention of Panforte but this cake, now made in several versions, is a direct descendant of medieval preparations that were once popular throughout Italy. The name means "strong

bread," a reference to the numerous spices used in its preparation. It also contains candied fruit, particularly citron and orange, and fresh almonds. The cake is sweetened with honey so that its texture is dense and rich. There is a delicious chocolate variation, unveiled in the early 19th century and known originally as *Torta delle Dame* or "Ladies' Cake." Another extremely popular type is the *Margherita*, which was created in honor of the Italian Queen's

visit to Siena in 1879. Sieneese serve Panforte as a dessert at the end of a meal or when they have visitors and they usually sip Vin Santo as an accompaniment. However, virtually any wine, sweet or dry, makes a good match.



Torrone

The accepted account of Torrone's appearance on the scene appears to have a historical foundation. The confection is said to have been created by pastry chefs in Cremona for presentation to Bianca Maria Visconti at her wedding to Francesco Sforza. The city had been

given to her in dowry by her father, the Duke of Milan. It must not have resembled modern versions, which are flat and rectangular, because they named it for Cremona's tower, known as the Torione. Torrone is still associated with Cremona, although it is now made in many other parts of Italy. A softer, more pliant version is produced in the Abruzzi region of south central Italy and another, flavored with Strega liqueur, is made at Benevento in Campania. The classic type is made with honey and egg whites and flavored with almonds, while hazelnuts, pistachios and chocolate are used in the numerous variations. Smaller, bite-sized Torroncini are also available on the market.



Candies

Italians have been creating candies for many centuries, originally with honey and then with sugar, when supplies of that more refined sweetening agent became readily available in the marketplace. Over the centuries, confectioners have perfected their techniques, while steadily

expanding the variety of their candies. Consumers can choose hard, soft or chewy versions but they may have difficulty selecting a flavor, since the range is enormous. Candies are flavored with all types of fruit and a vast variety of herbs, like mint, licorice and anise, as well as coffee and chocolate. Offered in a limitless series of attractive packages and containers, Italian candies make fine gifts that are always welcome.

Cookies

An invitation to someone's home for lunch or dinner almost inevitably means a trip to the store for the guest, who will want to present the host or hostess with a token of appreciation. In Italy, the gift usually consists of an assortment of small pastries, especially cookies. The Italian pastry tradition is ancient and over the centuries the assortment of specialties has grown to mammoth




proportions. Made with the freshest ingredients and flavored with walnuts, hazelnuts, coconut, almonds and pignoli, as well as chocolate, coffee, vanilla and fruits, cookies are always warmly received as gifts, especially since they are available in a kaleidoscopic variety of attractive packages and containers.

Chocolates

As with many of the arts and crafts, Italy taught the world much of what it knows today about the preparation of fine chocolates. In terms of the flavor and variety of its chocolates, it is still far ahead of most of the world. Produced in all shapes and sizes, flavored with an infinite range of nuts and fruits and a host of creams and liqueurs, Italian chocolates are certain to please every palate. Italy's confectioners are true perfectionists, concerned not only to produce chocolates of the highest standards of quality but also to present them in a way that is truly fitting. Many companies call in top designers to help them with their packaging so that the container will attain the same level of artistry as its contents.



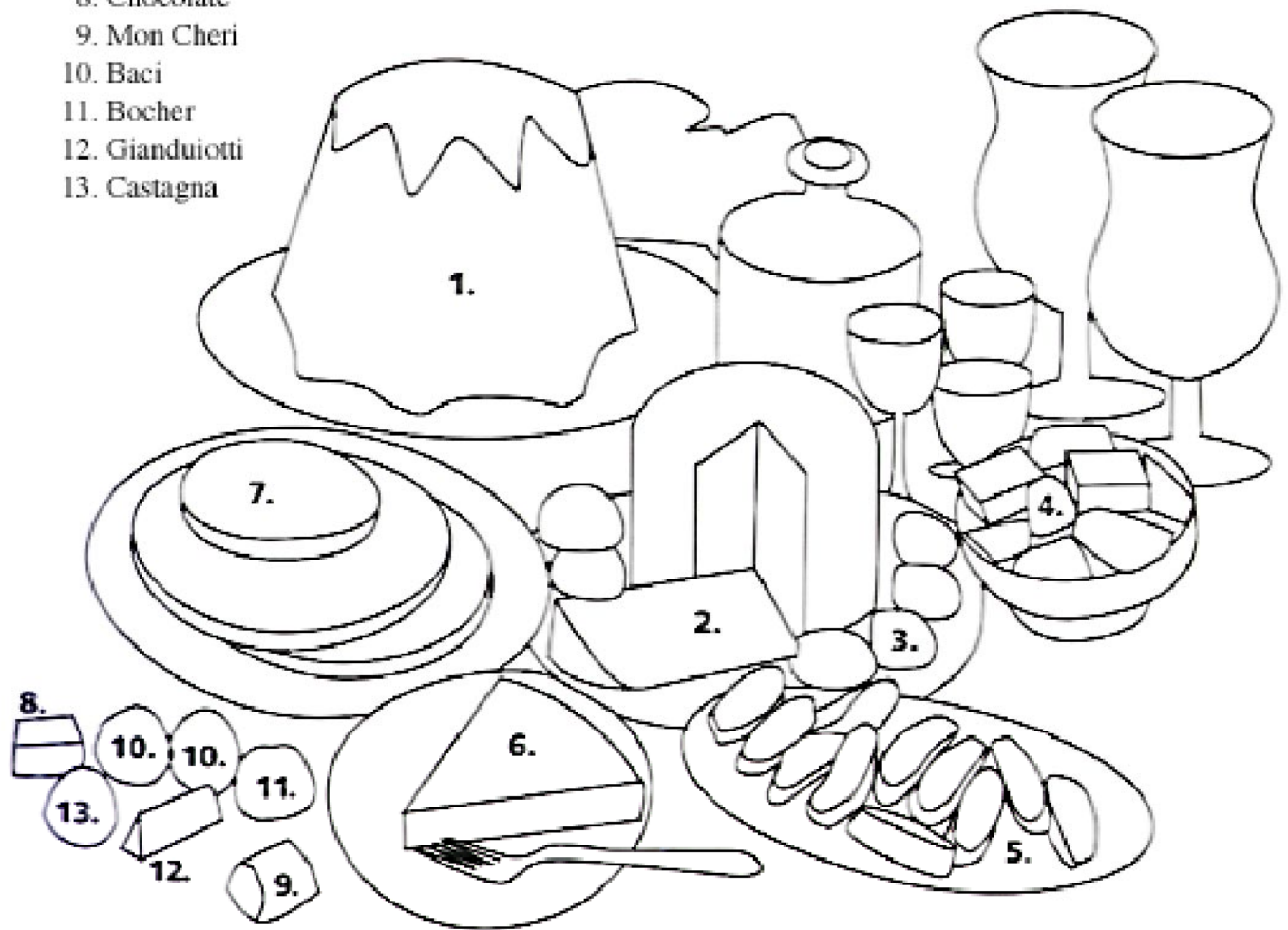


This brochure is an introduction to the wide range of pastries, cookies, chocolates, cakes and candies that we call DOLCE ITALIA.

For information or to receive our new Buyer's Guide, listing the names and addresses of importers and distributors of Italian confectionery products, please write to:

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1. Pandoro
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