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Traditional food to support Cultural Heritage in Calabria

Didactic Material nr. 7



Food Care

Introduction

Europe strongly supports traditional food for its cultural value, health benefits, and positive impact on rural economies. The EU protects and promotes traditional products to ensure their quality and authenticity.

The gastronomy of Calabria is deeply tied to its land, history, and Mediterranean identity. Known for bold flavors and simplicity, it relies on local ingredients like chili peppers, olive oil, 'nduja, Caciocavallo Silano DOP, and the Red Onion of Tropea PGI.

You can discover more about Calabria's authentic dishes [here](#).

What food supports Calabria's cultural heritage?

Red Onion Frittata (Frittata con Cipolla di Tropea): A simple and flavorful dish made with the famous sweet red onions of Tropea, eggs (or chickpea flour for a vegan version), olive oil, and a touch of herbs.

Pasta alla Silana: A hearty pasta from the Sila mountains with tomatoes, mushrooms, bell peppers, pecorino, and sometimes beans – perfect for vegetarian adaptation.

Vegan 'Nduja: Inspired by Calabria's iconic spicy spreadable sausage, this plant-based version uses sun-dried tomatoes, chili peppers, nuts, and olive oil to recreate the rich and fiery flavor.

Cudduraci (Calabrian Easter Bread): A traditional festive bread, slightly sweet, usually decorated with eggs – it can be adapted into a vegan version by replacing eggs with plant-based alternatives.

Zuppa di Legumi (Legume Soup): A rustic and warming winter soup made with lentils, beans, chickpeas, and seasonal greens, served with local bread.

Calabrian Vegetable Pitta (Pitta 'mpigliata / Pitta chjina): A stuffed bread typical of Calabria, often filled with seasonal vegetables, olives, and onions, offering a delicious vegetarian option.

Why is it important?

With each traditional recipe we preserve, we are safeguarding a piece of Calabria's heritage. Traditional food embodies the region's unique culture, its deep connection to the land and sea, and the values of its people. Supporting traditional Calabrian food is essential for keeping the stories, flavors, and culinary customs of the region alive.

What are the benefits?

- 1) Empowerment of Cultural Identity:** It helps maintain and celebrate Calabria's unique cultural identity and historical traditions, ensuring that the region's rich heritage is preserved and continues to thrive.
- 2) Economic Boost:** Traditional foods attract visitors and support local businesses, from farmers and food producers to restaurants, fostering economic growth. For example, you can visit [Colavolpe](#) a family-run company, founded in 1910, that stands out for its artisanal fig-based sweets, blending tradition with innovation.
- 3) Community Connection:** Sharing and preparing traditional Calabrian dishes strengthens family and community ties, enhancing social bonds and a sense of belonging.
- 4) Biodiversity:** Supporting traditional foods encourages the cultivation of native plants and heritage crops, promoting environmental sustainability and preserving Calabria's unique flora.
- 5) Historical Continuity:** It ensures that valuable culinary practices and recipes are passed down through generations, keeping Calabria's culinary legacy vibrant and connected to its past.

What can I do?

1) Cook Traditional Food: When you invite friends home for a party or lunch, prepare a traditional Calabrian dish. Guests—whether locals or foreigners—can discover new flavors while everyone celebrates Calabria’s cultural roots through food. You can also check this page, [Italy Segreta](#), to explore the 20 most typical Calabrian dishes and learn how they are usually enjoyed.

2) Buy from Local Shops and Markets: When purchasing food, try to buy from local shops that sell traditional products. This keeps you connected to Calabria’s culinary heritage and helps it thrive. Instead of supermarkets, visit local markets and buy fresh produce from local farmers. Check out this [video](#) about the local market in Amantea.

3) Choose Restaurants with Traditional Dishes: If you go out to eat, look for restaurants that serve authentic Calabrian dishes. Explore pages like [TasteAtlas Calabria](#) to find traditional food options you would enjoy. You can also check out this [Instagram page](#), where you’ll discover some of the best local spots in Calabria.

What have I learnt?

- Calabrian gastronomy connects us to the land through fresh, local ingredients like 'Nduja, Tropea onions, bergamot, and olive oil.
- Traditional food preserves culture, strengthens communities, and supports local farmers and businesses.
- Eating locally protects biodiversity and promotes sustainable farming practices.
- Everyday choices—cooking, shopping, and dining locally—help keep Calabria’s culinary heritage alive while fostering a more sustainable food system.

All is summerized in the [European approach of Microcredentials](#).

Micro-credential 1

Embodying sustainability value:

- 1.1 Value sustainability by reflecting on personal values while critically evaluating how they align with sustainability values.
- 1.2 Supporting fairness to support equity and justice for current and future generations and learn from previous generations for sustainability.
- 1.3 Promoting nature to acknowledge that humans are part of nature; and to respect the needs and rights of other species and of nature itself in order to restore and regenerate healthy and resilient ecosystems.

Micro-credential 4

“Acting for sustainability”

- 4.2 (Collective action) to act for change in collaboration with others.
- 4.3 (Individual initiative) to identify own potential for sustainability and to actively contribute to improving prospects for the community and the planet.