

EVERYBODY'S SWEET; LOVE DIFFERENCE - ARTISTIC MOVEMENT FOR AN INTERMEDITERRANEAN POLITIC

THE HISTORY

The essence of this sweets lies within the simplicity of the encounter between big and small hands, people singing, stories, that do not belong only to one territory, a single person or a family but to everybody, since the roots of culinary tradition mingled and interweaved within the story of several cultures.

The recipe, apparently bonded to a territory, given from generation to generation, is much more spread than women from Salento think. The "struffoli" are prepared in many southern regions, even in Sardinia. These fried and in honey covered "gnocchetti" are typically Turkish, Greek, Cypriotes, Lebanese, Spanish... the frying and the honey are moreover very connotative of Arab food.

The common history of this sweet is to be found in its rituality, the preparation technique and its ingredients, which are basic for a popular kitchen. Its origins are extended throughout all the Mediterranean and beyond. And maybe the particularity of this dish is to be found in the little rings, perhaps the idea of some woman who in order to prepare the sweet in tranquillity, gave the kids some dough to play, noticing afterwards that the shape was ideal to maintain the freshness of the fried dough.

Purceddhruzzi are prepared once a year in every household of Salento during the Christmas time, normally a few days before the 24th of December and they are offered to the guests until the 6th of January. Then, the honey and the frying conserve them for days.

Every house, every family, every housewife prepares her purceddhruzzi since generations, following a basic recipe which every family reclaims its own. It is a typical moment of celebration and encounter between women and children. The mandarins are the ones taken from the trees that stand in the interior gardens or in the country. The oil, strong and tasty, is the one made by the local olive - press and gets softer with the juice of the citrus fruit.

The most energetic housewives work the dough during a long time, sometimes swapping between each other. The most beautiful game for the children is making very tight rings with their small fingers. This turns out to be very valuable, since the purceddhruzzi have to be the smallest possible, remaining always in form of rings. The preparation becomes a moment of gathering, celebration, conversation and games. It is a "work" that lasts a long afternoon, one of the first in the winter.

A big amount is prepared, which is then subdivided in several dishes, each one will be brought to the festive lunch and dinners.

When the dish is nicely arranged with the little rings it is convivial to remove them with the finger one by one or in small amounts, just to lick afterwards the sticky fingers.

This sweet is served without cutlery or dishes. And each one of us becomes a child licking the fingers. Once the festive days are over, the empty dishes are brought back to the one who had prepared the purceddhruzzi, again there is some talking, a thank you and like this, a new moment of encounter.

INGREDIENTS

4/5 yolks
1 kg wheat 00
120 gr olive oil
100gr of white sugar
a small glass of dry liqueur
cinnamon sticks
oil to fry
a bit of salt
2 kg mandarins

PURCEDDHRUZZI

Winnow the wheat and form it in shape of a fountain on a marble surface. Place the yolks, the sugar, the oil, the liqueur and part of the juice from the squeezed mandarins in the centre of the crater. The salt goes in a lateral small hole.

First mix the liquids in the centre, then gradually begin to include the wheat. Work the dough with energy, adding more mandarin juice if necessary. The dough has to become soft and elastic, almost like a leavened one.

Once it is done, keep it wrapped in a clean cotton cloth while the rings are being prepared. Cut a piece of dough and form by using the palm of your hands thin rolls, with a short circumference of one centimetre. Cut in small section, but long enough to close them in small rings. Help yourself with the tip of the forefinger to close them and check the right dimension.

Heat the frying oil in a big pan and throw in the steaming oil the peel of some mandarins to verify the oil's temperature and to perfume it. Continue with frying the small rings that have to turn golden. Strain them on blotting or yellow paper.

In a nonstick pan heat some spoons of honey, sieve the fried rings and twirl them gently with a wooden spoon until they are well covered in honey. Repeat this with small quantities.

Place the in-honey-covered little rings on a nice round dish forming a "ring" by leaving the centre empty. Sprinkle generously the cinnamon, which has been previously crushed in a pounder. Add perhaps coloured pearls.

p.s. the eggs should preferably be fresh, the quantity of 4 or 5 yolks varies according to the size of the eggs; the quantity of the mandarins can vary according to the amount of squeezed juice, it is better to have some left overs and to use mandarins that are non treated