The Secrets of Pantelleria
An International Symposium
Organized by
Italian Ministry of Agriculture, Sicilian Region - Agriculture Department, Comune di Pantelleria, Oldways, and Fausto Luchetti

September 9–15, 2012 • Island of Pantelleria
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Introduction

Wonderful and deserted, abandoned and beautiful, navel of the canal of Sicily, Pantelleria shows the signs of its troubled birth through the black lava flows that descend to the sea, sometimes covered by the green splashes the color of the Mediterranean.

The centrality of its position in the Mediterranean Sea, 36 miles from North Africa and 65 from the Sicilian coast, has greatly influenced the complexities and radical changes of Pantelleria’s long history since it was first settled in late prehistoric times. The character and the spirit of the various peoples and cultures dominating the island throughout the centuries have been absorbed and have become the socio-cultural web that is Pantescan culture.

One of the most important symbols of the Mediterranean and the Island, is represented by the “sacred” olive tree. Throughout the centuries, it has patiently witnessed all the events that have concerned the Island, and it has disseminated its wisdom around, being a millenary historical, religious and political presence. Also, it is the only expression of the vegetable world that has been able to unite the three monotheistic religions: Christian, Jewish and Muslim.

The Saracen olive tree grown in Sicily is the symbol of the area, conveying a clear and topical message: a hug, a peace-wishing message among the three religions, in the geographical centre of a sea—the Mediterranean—that, according to the meaning of its name, should unite the various cultures bordering it rather than divide them.

The “lifestyle” of islanders represents a typical “enforcement” of the Mediterranean way of life: “Slow and relaxed rhythms, they try and take the time to make what they themselves expect in their daily life. A great luxury, to be the masters of time and not be ruled by it, they continue to manage ancestral wisdom.”

The wish that we are making is that the participants in this Symposium, the first of its kind in Pantelleria, can grasp and appreciate this wise way of life that with its simplicity and sobriety shows us the traditional path of our ancestors.

Fausto Luchetti
Former Executive Director of International Olive Oil Council

Benvenuto!

Welcome to Pantelleria, an island paradise, and part of the Region of Sicily.

Sicily has always been a crossroads for many populations, civilizations and cultures, a singular combination of historical, social, geographical, cultural and structural elements that have generated a specific identity, (sometimes fragmented and diversified).

The combination of historical and social elements have contributed to making Sicily a place from which we can draw the genetic resources that help to distinguish its wine, vegetal, and animal products from any other land.

Sicilian cuisine has always been based on products that originate from its own land. We have three types of Sicilian cuisine: baronial, a funny popular reinvention, and street cuisine or that of the “buffittieri” (from the French word “buffet” or street vendors) as they were once called. Each city, town, and family has always had its own interpretation of each traditional dish, a result of the distinct Sicilian individualism.

Certainly, Pantelleria is a crossroads of civilizations and has a spectacular brand of cuisine that is uniquely Sicilian and also of the land and heritage of Pantelleria.

We welcome you to this special place. We hope you enjoy your week, and in particular, learning about the land, foods, and wines—and then spreading the word about its magic.

Dario Cartobellotta
Director General,
Sicilian Region – Agriculture Department
The Secrets of Pantelleria

Pantelleria is a secret. Even for many Italians.

We’re here in Pantelleria this week to discover the secrets of this island, unknown to most, loved by nearly all who set foot on her shores.

Oldways first “met” Pantelleria through the eyes of Fausto Luchetti, the former Executive Director of the International Olive Oil Council (IOOC) and a long-time friend. Oldways’ founder Dun Gifford became acquainted with and worked with Fausto and the IOOC from the mid-80s through the founding of Oldways and our first projects on the Mediterranean Diet. As we became close friends with Fausto, his wife Mar, and son Alessandro, we heard stories and saw photos of the place that has been his summer home for more than 40 years now. Through these photos and stories, we began to understand the allure of Pantelleria.

While even most Italians don’t know Pantelleria or know a lot about Pantelleria, over the years many civilizations visited, inhabited and re-named this island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea.

According to the book I bought in August (Pantelleria–Bent El-Rhia):

“A mysterious prehistoric people inhabited the island of Pantelleria, living off wild fruits and hunting. Their dead were protected in their eternal sleep by grandiose semi-spherical monuments, the ‘sesi’. In the historical age the island was visited by the Phoenicians and Carthaginians, who called it Iranim (ostriches). They probably saw the resemblance of the ‘sesi’ to large birds’ eggs and associated them with their custom of placing ostrich eggs next to their dead. Traces of their presence can be found in the Phoenician acropolis dating from the 7th century BC, to the south of the town, and which was later occupied by the Romans in the 3rd century BC. The Romans called the island Cossura, a name of Greek origin. For centuries the island was the target of plundering by Vandals and pirates. In 860 AD it was colonized by Muslim farmers of Berber origin from Sicily, belonging to various tribes. They introduced zibibbo grapes and citrus fruits. In 1090, the Arabs were thrown out of Sicily and Pantelleria changed hands numerous times over the following centuries. Each new conqueror gave it a new name. So the ancient Iranim was called Gusiras by its African neighbors, Bent El-Rhia (daughter of the wind) by the Arabs and then became Pantelaream, Pantellaria, and, finally, Pantelleria.”

When Dun and I made our first visit to Pantelleria we fell under the spell of the island, and knew that its foods and wines and culinary traditions were ones that we wanted to introduce to the world at large—through journalists, importers and retailers. In addition to appreciating the amazing capers, the splendid wines, the fruits and vegetables, we hope you will also take back a sense of the place and of the Mediterranean lifestyle. Though we may not be able to squeeze a siesta into our regular lives, the rhythm of the Pantescan Mediterranean lifestyle is also “a product” of great value—along with capers and passito, sun-dried tomatoes, great recipes and other wonderful wines—that is worth adding to our lives.

That’s part of the secret.

Sara Baer-Sinnott
President, Oldways

“.....Pantelleria is impossible not to love.”

Marta Ferri, designer Vogue, September 2012
The Place

A Black and Green Pearl

Pantelleria is so extraordinary as to be almost impossible to describe. Just a short distance from Tunisia, Pantelleria has a typically Mediterranean climate, with hot summers, mild winters, scarce rainfall and almost constant wind.

Strangely, the people of Pantelleria have never been great fishermen, even though they have one of the most beautiful parts of the Mediterranean at their disposal, and they have always concentrated on agriculture. Zibibbo grapes and capers are grown in huge quantities, with the help of the fertile volcanic soil, and protected from the wind by dry stone wall boundaries.

The people of Pantelleria have always had to work hard to tame a land that is not really suitable for agriculture and, with persistence and industriousness; they have transformed the stony hillside into flat terraces. Not being able to tame the winds, they have developed various ways of reducing its effects, even by changing the shape of plants: vines and olive trees are kept low down and grown ‘horizontally’, so to speak. The result of this loving care for their plants is the ‘Pantelleria or Arab garden’.

The dominant color on the island is the black of the lava, which has earned it the name of ‘black pearl of the Mediterranean’. The abundance of volcanic rocks (quartz, opal, resinite and cossirite) is a great attraction for geologists and mineral collectors. Although the last major eruption (Punta Framm) was in 1891, the volcanic nature of the island is still evident in various phenomena. The ‘favare’, for example, are very hot jets of steam that come out of cracks in the rocks (such as those you can see in the districts of Favarelle and Serraglia); the ‘dry baths’ or ‘stoves’, which are natural caves giving off vapors that are used to cure rheumatism; the marvelous Lake of Venus (photo above) or ‘Water Bath’, which occupies a crater 500 meters in diameter with hot springs nearby, called caldarelle; the thermal waters that flow at various points of the coast between Gadir and Nikà, with therapeutic radioactive properties; the cuddie, 24 craters of considerable height surrounding Montagna Grande, an extinct volcano and the highest point of the island (836 meters).

Pantelleria – Bent El Rhia
Edizione Affinita Elettive (2005)

The Place

Pantelleria, Island Of Stone and Sun

As beautiful and bountiful as its seascapes may be, it is the landscape, a particular marriage of nature and agriculture, that renders Pantelleria unique among the Mediterranean islands.


A Speck Between Sicily and Africa

While the first settlers arrived here from North Africa as far back as 3000 B.C., Pantelleria feels as if it was formed only a week ago last Thursday. Created by volcanic eruptions some 250,000 years ago, the gnarled shapes of black lava protrude everywhere through thin dusty soil. There were eruptions as recently as 1831 and 1891, and hot springs and whiffs of sulfur still remind of the constant activity below the surface.

Nature, then, is ever present. Two volcanoes - the Montagna Grande and the Monte Gibele—dominate the island, but smaller hills signal the sites of lesser eruptions. One crater floor is covered by a small lake—the Mirror of Venus, or Specchiu di Venere -with water softened by an array of minerals. One edge is heated by hot sulfur bubbling up from below.

Then there is the wind, sometimes hot, sometimes cold, coming from either Africa or Europe depending on the time of the year, but always, it seems, blowing. And that, along with the lava, explains the minimal vegetation. Small pine trees cover the two main volcanoes, but otherwise cactuses seem happiest, sprouting from between rocks as if water and earth were unnecessary extras.

Agriculture has adjusted in a remarkable way. Olive trees are not trees, but little bushes no more than two feet high that hug the ground to avoid the wind. Vineyards in turn look like vegetable patches from afar, albeit producing excellent quality grapes on vines so low that they need no support. Caper bushes, which provide one of Pantelleria’s main exports, have also learned to grow outward rather than upward, their orchidlike flowers bringing a rare splash of color.


The fresh climate can be quite a surprise as you are now considerably closer to Africa, 120 kilometres south of Sicily and only 70 kilometres east of Tunisia. But this is only the first pleasant surprise you’ll get on this tiny island (14 kilometres long, nine kilometres wide), where climate, nature, architecture and gastronomy live in sweet harmony to the joy of its 8,000 inhabitants.

Jesper Storgaard Jensen, Toronto Star, July 30, 2009
The Dammuso, Garden, and Rural World of Pantelleria

The dammuso and the garden are the two jewels of the rural world of Pantelleria. They represent a unique heritage of great cultural value.

The pantesco garden is a dry stone fence designed to create an ideal climate for the growth of citrus trees. There are at least 1,500 of the oldest gardens, which may be circular, square or oval.

The dammuso is classified as rural architecture or as architecture without architects. Formed from a simple unit, the dammuso is enriched as it grows into several units, adjusting its form to the nature of the ground.

Outside, the dammuso is harsh and dark, part of the stony landscape, emerging from the walls like cuts of shadows. The inside contains domes and arches that run after each other, creating the pleasant feeling of an embrace. The dammuso has the typical characteristics of the island, roughness and acceptance, harshness and gentleness, and it is certainly the most valuable asset of the island.

I personally think that no matter how interesting the dammuso is, its greater value is the ability to be part of the landscape, to disappear between the walls, to have little visual impact so that its multiplication and repetition may be considered a quality rather than a disservice. For this reason, even if with little professional ethics, a law was passed, forcing people to build the new buildings as a dammuso. The new building techniques and anti-seismic laws have nothing to do with the dry stone dammuso, but at least the law provides historical continuity to the landscape.

When in the mid-60’s the first tourists came in search of the sea and sun that the islands of Sicily certainly had to offer, these tourists discovered, without ever expecting it, a very different flavor that would characterize their stay. In fact, the “architectural” landscape bursts in all its majesty in the pleasure of the holiday, becoming its symbol, image and breath. Walking, idling about, perusing this area is stimulating, enjoyable; the encounter with restaurants is sweet, the sun, wind, lights, flavors, scents leave the visitor with the feeling that he is part of a different, unique, enveloping world, especially that he is part of a real world.
Program

Sunday, September 9 – Benveuto
Arrivals in Pantelleria throughout the day

At Mursia Hotel - Check-in to your room with a view of the Mediterranean Sea. Unpack, rest, and then meet your fellow delegates downstairs in the evening.

Welcome Reception and Dinner - A Culinary Introduction to Pantelleria - We’ve designed the menu to give you an introduction to the spectacular ingredients that make Pantescan food so special.

Monday, September 10 – A Day of Introductions
Breakfast Buffet at the Mursia Hotel

At Cala Tramontana - We’ll travel south, winding along the coast to beautiful Cala Tramontana for our first official Opening Session, with an overview of the Symposium, and a primer on basics of the island – history, archaeology, architecture, food and wine.

Opening Session: Pantelleria’s Rich History – from Archaeology to Architecture to Food and Wine

Welcome:
Dott. Massimo Russo, Vice Presidente della Regione Siciliana e Assessore alla Salute (Palermo)
Onorevole Prof. Francesco Aiello, Assessore alle Risorse Agricole e Alimentari (Palermo)
Dott. Dario Cartabellotta, Dirigente Generale Assessorato Risorse Agricole e Alimentari (Palermo)
Dott. Fausto Luchetti, former Executive Director, United Nation Organization, International Olive Oil Council (Pantelleria and Madrid)
Sara Baer-Sinnott, President, Oldways (Boston)

Presentations:
Gabriella Giuntoli, Architect and Urban Planner (Pantelleria)
Prof. Sebastiano Tusa, Archaeologist, Soprintendente del Mare per la Regione Sicilia (Pantelleria)
Mary Taylor Simeti, Author and Farmer (Palermo)

Exhibit and Tasting Lunch of Pantescan Products and Wines

Tuesday, September 11 – A Day of Capers
Breakfast Buffet at the Mursia Hotel

En Route to and In Scauri - We will see, learn, taste, and experience capers—from the field to production to the kitchen and then the table. We’ll visit Bonomo & Giglio’s caper productions, and also have a discussion period, questions and answers with Gabriele Lasagni of Bonomo & Giglio. Prof. Giorgio Calabrese will speak about the organoleptic characteristics and biological value of Pantelleria capers.

Cooking Demonstration at La Nicchia - The Many Ways to Use Capers
Lunch at La Nicchia: Capers Galore!

Around the Island - Return to the Mursia Hotel via Ghirlanda Valley for other breathtaking views of the island.

In Rukia - Classic Country Dinner at Zinedi

Wednesday, September 12 – The Mediterranean Diet – Pantescan and Sicilian-Style
Breakfast Buffet at the Mursia Hotel

At Mursia Hotel - Part of Pantelleria’s allure is its lifestyle and way of eating, the Pantescan Mediterranean Diet. As a framework, we’ll hear from a trio of experts about the healthfulness of the Mediterranean way of eating and living.

Session: …Pantelleria and the Heart of the Mediterranean Lifestyle
Friday, September 14 – A Day of Tastings

Breakfast Buffet at the Mursia Hotel

At the Dammuso of Fausto & Mar Luchetti - Tasting of olive oils, followed by Sicilian nebrodi area products degustation. We’ll experience an olive oil tasting by one of the world’s experts in olive oil. Fausto Luchetti is the long-time executive director of the International Olive Oil Council, and one of the people who helped to put a bottle of olive oil in kitchens around the world. The panel leader Pippo Ricciardo will present the tasting.

Lunch at the Luchetti’s, following the olive oil tasting.

At Castello Barbacane – Comune di Pantelleria - No trip is complete without a visit to a castle. We’ll travel to the island’s castle to enjoy a buffet of Pantelleria’s finest food and wine. Farewell Buffet and Exhibit of Pantescan Foods and Wines

Thursday, September 13 – A Pantescan Wellness Day

Breakfast Buffet at the Mursia Hotel

From the Mountain - Pantescan wellness encompasses food, wine and lifestyle. We’ll experience Pantelleria’s built-in secrets for a day of the island’s natural ‘health’.

A Pantescan Wellness Day illustrated by Giuseppe D’Aietti, Storico di Pantelleria. Visit to a natural sauna in the mountains

At Basile Winery - Visit, lunch and wine tasting

To the Lake, to the Sea - Swim in the warm, thermal Lago di Venere (Lake of Venus), with or without a cleansing mud bath

Visit to Gadir - A small fishing village (near Armani’s summer house), and the chance for a dip into the thermal basins dug out of the lava

Return to the hotel, the remainder of the day is free for rest or adventures

Saturday, September 15 – ArrivederCi

Breakfast Buffet at the Mursia Hotel

Free time at the hotel and Departures
The Food & Wine

Pantelleria Cuisine

The cuisine of Pantelleria reflects the influence of the various peoples that have occupied the island. Typical local dishes worth trying are the delicate ‘bitter’ ravioli, stuffed with ricotta and mint leaves, and the fragrant Pantelleria pesto, a sauce made from raw tomatoes, olive oil, garlic, basil and chili pepper, and which is used as a dressing for everything from pasta to fish to meat.

From nearby Africa, Pantelleria has adopted fish couscous, always with the addition of a variety of vegetables and pulses and served as a single course; sciakì sciuka, a mixture of fried vegetables, and cucurumà, made with the delicious local courgettes. Capers, along with the delicate local fresh tunna cheese and fragrant oregano add a particular touch to the whole cuisine of Pantelleria.

Fish is always cooked simply: grilled, baked or in delicious soups. Amberjack, dentex, grouper, dassie, swordfish and lobster, as well as sea-urchins, and limpets are used to make a delicious sauce and migroci, a local variety of crab, all add taste to the cuisine of the island. Many of the desserts come from the Arab tradition, such as the traditional Easter cake, the cannateddro, and mustazzola: a simple pastry filled with a mixture of semolina, honey or mulled wine, cinnamon, candied orange peel and other spices. It is also worth trying the sweet ravioli filled with sugared ricotta and cinnamon, the sfinci, a kind of pancake covered with honey, the cassateddri and the pasticiotti.

Food of the Place

My first dinner on the Sicilian island of Pantelleria was like waking in a dream. I had fallen into bed in late afternoon after enduring four flights over 18 hours and was lured back among the living only by the seductive smells of good things getting better as they roasted: potatoes with rosemary and olive oil; grouper with sage, mint, parsley, basil and garlic. When I waded dazedly to the table, a big bowl of penne with the potent local pesto of tomatoes and capers was also waiting, along with good, rough vino bianco.

The whole island seemed to be encapsulated in that one meal. The fish, oil and wine were local, the herbs grew wild, and the flavor combinations were centuries old.

Everything was of the place, unique to a stony but fertile chunk of land just off the coast of North Africa where the wind blows so incessantly that grapevines hug the dry ground and lemon and almond trees are planted inside circular stone walls for protection.

The Food & Wine

Capers

Capers are flower buds picked before they open from a beautiful low bush that grows wild all along the shores of central and southern Italy, trailing long sprays of coin-shaped leaves and delicate white and purple flowers across rocky cliffs and hillsides, not to mention over the heads of oblivious tourists in the Forum in Rome. Sicilian capers, of which the most prized are those that come from the tiny island of Pantelleria, are considerably bigger and more intense in flavor than Provençal capers, and they are usually preserved under salt rather than vinegar. Included in almost every classical list of spices to be kept on hand, capers have a pungent, almost peppery taste that is still one of the most characteristic flavors of Sicilian cooking.

The Caper

The caper, whose name comes from the Arabic Cabr or Cabir, originates from the Asian sub-tropical area. Maybe not everyone knows that capers are the flower of the plant still in bud. If left to blossom, they are very beautiful flowers, elegant and fragile, almost exotic. The fruits look like gherkins. If you see a plant in flower it means that it has been neglected: every flower is an unpicked caper.

On Pantelleria the nocellara variety is grown, being conserved in salt since time immemorial to give it a distinctive taste. The ground, the cultivation, the air and the method of conservation make the Pantelleria caper a unique and unrepeatable product.

It is a fundamental ingredient in the island’s cuisine and you will find it in starters, salads, pasta, flavorings for main courses or simply on its own with freshly baked homemade bread.

The caper, however, is not only a pleasure to eat. Even in the 1600s a treatise extolled its curative properties. It was considered a sedative, kindled appetite, lowered blood pressure and mitigated toothache.

There is another quality of the caper not to be underestimated: it seems to rekindle another kind of appetite! This belief is widespread in the Mediterranean area and is part of popular tradition. In any case, its therapeutic properties in lowering cholesterol have recently been discovered.
The Food & Wine

Passito di Pantelleria

Passito di Pantelleria is an Italian DOC for Moscato wines made from dried grapes grown in Italy’s most southerly territory, the island of Pantelleria. Situated just 40 miles (70km) from the north-east coast of Tunisia, in northern Africa, this volcanic island lies at a latitude of 36 degrees north and is home to some of Europe’s most southerly vineyards.

Pantelleria is a satellite island of Sicily (as is Lipari, on the northern side of the Sicilian ‘mainland’) and for many centuries has contributed to the island’s enviable reputation for sweet wine production. The wines are even referred to in ancient mythology; the goddess Tanit is said to have seduced Apollo, on the advice of Venus, by serving him Muscat wine from the island. The wine was barely heard of outside the island’s close-knit community for nearly 2000 years after the myth’s original circulation, and was not exported even to Italy until the 1880s. It finally gained a formal place in the modern Italian wine system when both Moscato di Pantelleria and its Passito di Pantelleria variant were granted DOC status in August 1971. It was the third Sicilian wine style to gain a DOC title, after Etna (August 1968) and Marsala (April 1969).

These ancient wines are made from the Muscat of Alexandria grape, a Muscat almost as widely planted as its better-known cousin (Muscat Blanc a Petit Grains) but generally considered inferior, not just because of its susceptibility to disease but also due to its pungent muskiness. Muscat of Alexandria is thought to have originated around the Nile Delta, near the Egyptian city of Alexandria. In Sicily, it is called Zibibbo, which means raisin in Arabic, adding weight to this suggested provenance. Another synonym is Muscat Romain, which it earned due to its distribution around the Mediterranean by the Romans.

Wines made from dried grapes (for which passito is the Italian term) have existed for thousands of years, immortalized by the writers of the ancient world. It is most likely that the tradition came about as a solution to wine-conservation challenges: the higher sugar and alcohol content of the resulting wines made the chances of spoilage much lower. The practice is still in force in the modern wine world, most notably in Italy.

The Food & Wine

Capers of Pantelleria

Capers grow on bushy plants about a foot and a half high and two to three feet in diameter, with long, trailing branches that have coin-shaped leaves and exquisite flowers, white petals surrounding a spray of delicate purple stamens. The caper does produce a small fruit that can be pickled, but the prize is the flower bud, the smaller and more compact the better...Each plant must be visited about once a week to catch the buds before they open. Picked and sorted by size, the buds are cured in a salt brine for a week, then packed in coarse sea salt; after a month, they are ready for use. Pantelleria capers have an intensely aromatic flavor that is exalted by being cured in salt rather than vinegar, and the Pantescans make imaginative use of them in salads, in pasta sauces and with the delicious fresh fish that dominate the local cuisine.

Mary Taylor Simeti

Capers and Health

Capers, used in such culinary delights ...may be small. But they are an unexpectedly big source of natural antioxidants that show promise for fighting cancer and heart disease when added to meals, particularly meats, researchers in Italy are reporting.

The flower buds of a small bush, capers have been used for centuries in Mediterranean cuisine, where they provide a salty tang and decorative flair to a variety of meats, salads, pastas and other foods.

In the new study, Maria A. Livrea and colleagues note that other foods in the so-called Mediterranean diet have gotten plenty of attention for their health benefits. Capers, however, have been largely overlooked.

Their laboratory study involved adding caper extracts to grilled ground-turkey, and analyzing byproducts formed during simulated digestion. The scientists found that caper-extract helped prevent the formation of certain byproducts of digested meat that have been linked by others to an increased risk of cancer and heart disease. That beneficial effect occurred even with the small amounts of caper typically used to flavor food.

“Caper may have beneficial health effects, especially for people whose meals are rich in fats and red meats,” the study concluded.

The article, Bioactive Components of Capers (Capparis spinosa L.) from Sicily and Antioxidant Effects in a Red Meat Simulated Gastric Digestion, is published in the Oct. 17 issue of ACS’ Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry.

ScienceDaily, Oct. 25, 2007

Wine-searcher.com
Recipes

All recipes are from *La cucina di Pantelleria*. With help from Chef Maurizio Billardello del Ristorante La Nicchia. Text and recipes by Gianni Busetta, photos and graphics by Grazia Cucci, Arti Grafiche Campo di Alcamo, February 2011

**Pantelleria Pesto**

400g (13 ⅓ oz) ripe tomatoes
2 cloves garlic
50cl (2 cups) extra-virgin olive oil
1 sprig parsley
5 basil leaves
Salt to taste
Pepper to taste
Chili pepper to taste

Roast the tomatoes, peel, seed and chop them.

In a mortar pound the garlic, parsley and basil until creamy.

Mix with the tomatoes, season with salt and pepper and add chili pepper as desired.

Serves 4

**Caper Paste**

500g (about 1 lb) Pantelleria capers
5g (a teaspoon) of oregano
300 ml (9oz) extra-virgin olive oil

Soak the capers in water for a few hours, changing the water at least twice.

Drain, squeeze hard and blend with all the other ingredients.

**Warm Caponata with Toasted Almonds**

4 aubergines (eggplants)
1 medium-sized onion
50g (1 ⅓ oz) black olives
50g (1 ⅓ oz) minced toasted almonds
20g (¾ oz) Pantelleria capers in oil
15cl (5oz) extra-virgin olive oil
3 celery stalks
3cl (1oz) vinegar
3 tablespoons sugar
3 tablespoons tomato sauce
1 cup water
Extra-virgin olive oil for frying
Salt to taste

Peel the aubergine and dice into ½-inch cubes, salt and let sweat for about an hour.

Put the sliced celery and onion in a frying pan, add the extra-virgin olive oil and cup of water and sauté over moderate heat until the water evaporates. Add the capers, olives, sugar and tomato sauce and simmer for 15 minutes.

Fry the aubergines, drain and remove the oil, add to the other ingredients and serve with a sprinkling of minced toasted almonds.

Serves 4

**Mediterranean-Flavored Swordfish**

4 fresh swordfish steaks 2cm (¾-inch) thick
20 cherry tomatoes
Extra-virgin olive oil
Black olives
Pantelleria capers
Minced parsley
Salt to taste

Lay the swordfish steaks in a baking dish and salt to taste.

Cover the fish with the tomatoes, cut in halves, the pitted olives and rinsed capers.

Bake for 20 minutes at 200 degrees C (400 degrees F).

Combine the extra-virgin olive oil with the finely minced parsley and filter.

Remove the fish from the oven and season with this mixture.

Serves 4
Recipes

Ciaki Ciuka
300g (10oz) potatoes
400g (13 ½ oz) bell peppers
300g (10oz) tomatoes
150g (5oz) aubergine (eggplant)
1 onion
1 cup extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

Sauté the finely minced onion in a bit of olive oil until golden.
Dice the bell peppers, tomatoes, aubergine and potatoes into small cubes.
Add to the sauté and simmer for about 30 minutes, adding salt and pepper to taste.
The more daring can add chili pepper as is used for this dish in Tunisia.
Serves 4

Pantescan Salad
3 boiled potatoes
5 red tomatoes
1 Pantelleria red onion
30g (1oz) Pantelleria capers in oil
10 black olives
Extra-virgin olive oil
Oregano
Salt to taste

Boil the potatoes, peel and slice them.
Add the sliced tomatoes, the onion sliced into rings, the olives and rinsed capers.
Season with extra-virgin olive oil and salt and sprinkle with oregano.
If you like you can add pieces of dried local fish.
Serves 4

Recipes

Cherry Tomatoes, Capers and Oregano
300g (10oz) cherry tomatoes
1 tablespoon Pantelleria capers
Extra-virgin olive oil to taste
Oregano to taste
Salt to taste

Cut the cherry tomatoes into halves and season with the capers, salt and a sprinkle of oregano.
Serves 4

Fresh Olives, Crushed and Seasoned
Crush just-picked green olives and cover with boiling water and salt.
The following day change the water and let the olives soak another half-day.
Drain the olives and season with minced garlic, parsley and oregano, salt, olive oil and vinegar.

Vanilla Ice-Cream with Passito di Pantelleria and Raisins
1kg (2.2lbs) vanilla ice cream
100g (3 ½oz) Pantelleria raisins
10cl (3 ½oz) Passito di Pantelleria

Pour the Passito into a bowl with the raisins and steep for about an hour.
Add to the ice cream and mix until you get a smooth, soft cream.
Before serving chill in the freezer for 15 minutes.
Serves 4
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delegates</th>
<th>Delegates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Onorevole Prof. Francesco Aiello, Assessor alle Risorse Agricole e Alimentari (Palermo, Italy)</td>
<td>Sandy MacLeod, A.I.A, Leed AP, Director of Technical Services, Skanska USA (Boston, USA)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Sara Baer-Sinnott, President, Oldways (Boston, USA)</td>
<td>Dott. Michele Mariani, Italian Ministry of Agriculture (Rome, Italy)</td>
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<tr>
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Sara Baer-Sinnott
President, Oldways
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