



Hazelnuts



“*Tonda gentile trilobata*”, this is how the local hazelnut variety is described in Italian (round, gentle, trilobate): round for its shape and gentle for the fine taste that pleases the palate. In actual fact, *gentile* is a technical term, meaning “cultivated”, “not wild”. The most valuable cultivar of its kind, otherwise known as the Piedmont Hazelnut, was awarded a protected geographical indication status back in 1993 and now has its own ‘Protection Consortium’ prescribing its qualitative parameters and growing areas. There is no doubt about its place of origin, i.e. the lower and upper Langa (hilly area) of Piedmont stretching from the Roero district through the Mondovì district to the hill slopes of Carrù and Ceva. Hazelnut crops and the local landscape and people are in a symbiotic relationship: neat geometries of hazelnut trees alternating with vines and a good cuisine always open to new ideas. The decisively superior quality of this variety is paramount: “energy pearls” in folk medicine with such exclusive properties as high rancidity resistance, easy peelability, a low breaking rate during roasting, a sweet taste and an intense aroma. Other strengths include a subtle and full shell, a uniform size and a high yield. Its fast growing production is closely related to the development of the confectionery industry. The hazelnut history is deep rooted in the Piedmontese stubbornness. As Napoleon Bonaparte, through his Continental Blockade, prevented the importation of products from the British colonies – first and foremost cocoa – the only resource-sparing solution was mixing cocoa with roasted hazelnuts. This alternative set an example and culminated in the creation of *gianduotti* in 1865, the early foil-wrapped chocolate creams.

Pears

“Don’t let the peasant know how good cheese is with pears”. This old Italian saying befits the setting of the Cuneo province given the countless varieties of pears and the wide choice of locally produced dairy products. Pear growing today is mainly driven by the domestic demand for consumer-preferred varieties; these include Conference, Abate Fétel, Kaiser, Williams and Decana del Comizio. Harvest is in September and October, but ripening takes place in the following months and ultimately heightens the fruit fragrance and full development of its undisputed organoleptic properties. Consumers’ penchant for quality is matched by the typical taste and special use of each cultivar: whether sugary, mouth-melting and savoury, i.e. ideal for fresh consumption, or thick-pulped and pleasantly aromatic, i.e. qualities which make it a perfect candidate for baking. The Cuneo cuisine uses pears for dessert. Classical autumn pears – as the only indigenous variety – are particularly suited for this special use. Among the most renowned is the *Martin sec*, a small and tasty flask-shaped, rust-hued, yellow pear that tastes excellently when cooked in full-bodied red wine seasoned with cinnamon and cloves. Likewise, the *Madernassa* is a perfect match to *timbales*, with its larger size, its green-yellowish skin hued in red in sun-exposed parts, and its aromatic and acidulous pulp that lends itself to mouth-watering fillings when mixed with macaroons, sugar and egg yolks and sprinkled with rich Barolo or Barbaresco wine for a unique scent.

Peaches

Cuneo peaches are synonymous with high quality, and the pride of a long-standing tradition: a healthy, sugary fruit epitomising naturalness and freshness – to be found in practical wrappings in small shops and supermarkets alike and making its grand debut in the consumer world, as is normally the case for the most valuable products. Marketing is backed by a big promotional push from the Cuneo Chamber of Commerce partnering with Producers’ and Traders’ Associations with the ultimate purpose of re-vamping an old tradition. The early peach crops in the Cuneo province were grown in the municipalities of the Roero district in 1885, a period of viticulture crisis following the devastations caused by the downy-mildew and vine-louse epidemics. This initiative was full of vision and would soon gain ground with steady success for a few decades. Next, the expansion towards plains prevailed, with new cultivars and a strong entrepreneurial spirit. The Saluzzo district took over the tradition and almost totally accounts for the local peach production today, which consists of three main varieties: yellow-fleshed peaches, white-fleshed peaches and smooth-skinned nectarines.

Cutting-edge crops combine technological innovation and professionalism without overlooking the demand for food and environmental safety from consumers.



Berries

Just think of the magic of berries on consumers’ tables: blueberries, raspberries, currants, alpine strawberries, blackberries and gooseberries are all small fruits but taste great and also adapt to a wide variety of cooking uses. Berry crops tell a lot about the territory with open valleys rich in water, a healthy climate, a stable and well-preserved ecosystem, fairly acid and fertile terrains... these propitious conditions are all enhanced by eco-friendly agricultural practices and protection interventions inspired by the principles of integrated pest management. A proactive entrepreneurial spirit characterises many small holdings in the Bisalta valleys and the Saluzzo, Mondovì and Ceva districts.

Plums

A unique sweetness and aroma, a rich and soft flesh and an intense scent are among the qualities of plums grown in the Mondovì and Saluzzo district, the Monviso valleys and the Langa and Roero hills, which offer suitable conditions for their growth. Traditionally, they originate from Damascus. That is why they are locally called *Dalmassin* or *Darmassin*, or *Ramassin* in the Saluzzo district. They are small, elongate, occasionally round-shaped, with a purple colour and bluish hues. Their thin, waxy or opaque skin preserves them for a long period.



Edizioni AGAMI - Cuneo



Cuneo Fruit

The Heart of Fruit Growing in the Cuneo Province



For an unabridged version and further detailed information, check the website www.cn.camcom.gov.it/prodottitipici





Apricots

Apricots' appearance on the fruit stand herald the start of the summer season. And they never go unnoticed with their sunny and charming look and their bright, red-hued orange colour. Harvested at the height of their ripeness, with their soft and juicy flesh, apricots enliven the table through their taste and scent and, what is more, they are totally healthy as they are rich in vitamins, minerals and other nutrients, chiefly potassium, sugars and carotenoids. Indeed, they are an invaluable source of energy for adolescents, fatigued people and sportspeople alike.

Production in Cuneo is rich and diversified ranging from early cultivars, bearing fruit at the start of June on the Alba hills, to the late ripening varieties along the foothills rimming the Varaita valley – a hilly area with fresh and dry terrains, particularly suited for a proper ripening process in the second half of July.

Here the round Costigliole apricot is grown, which can be appreciated for its excellent aroma, its round shape and medium size, and its distinctive yellow-hued orange skin with red dots. The secret is in its taste, with an extremely sweet and fragrant flesh and an intense flavour.



Chestnuts

Each valley has its chestnut variety with a highly qualitative farming system involving around 110 mountain and valley-line municipalities with tens of local cultivars. This excellence has earned the Cuneo Chestnut the PGI status, a token of quality for fresh and processed products alike. A list of properties will suffice to attract consumers: a good fruit set, a kernel with a crispy texture, a sweet, delicate taste, and a light-brown skin with darker stripes.

Known as "the poor's bread" in popular culture and a staple commodity in peasants' diet for generations, chestnuts are fit for many different recipes of local cuisine from starters to desserts. The fresh product is ideally boiled in water with laurel and wild-fennel scents or can be used as a supporting ingredient to soups, gnocchi or tagliatelle. In cakes, chestnuts combine well with cocoa, milk and whipped cream.

And this is not enough: with a glossy and sweet-smelling sugar coating, placed in an elegant baking cup, chestnuts dress up as marrons glacés. This craft tradition has been passed down from ancient times. A candied violet embellishment is an added plus.

This valuable mountain resource was the subject of legendary tales, where local history mingles with the labour of whole communities. Its tradition is now revamped in the National Chestnut Fair held every year in October in Cuneo.



Cherries

Whether you like it sweet or sour, the two locally produced cherry species fit the purpose; in botany they are known as *Prunus avium* and *Prunus cerasus* respectively.

The first group comprises the tenerina cherry – soft, juicy and dark-fleshed – as well as the harder duracina cherry – heart-shaped and bright red or even yellow in colour; the second group comprises such acidulous fruits as morello and marasca cherries, or such bitter fruits as the amarelle cherries. "Cherries are very more-ish" – never was the phrase more appropriate for this mood-lifting, inviting and, more importantly, nourishing and healthy fruit given the wide range of shapes and tastes available on the market. Among the most popular is the Grafione bianco, used in the food industry in alcohol as it does not release colour. Cherries are very rarely left long on trees. The only drawback is the fairly short season not extending beyond St. John's day (24th of June), however their high vitamin and nutrient (chiefly sugar) content makes them extremely healthy in addition to being good.

Grown all along the foothills of the Cuneo province and in the lower Langa – characterised by a reduced disease incidence – cherries are the first products of the spring harvest. This is delicately handmade by specialised staff. In addition to fresh consumption, cherries are most frequently used in jams, jellies, syrups and liquors (the typical ratafià).



Strawberries

Red, fleshy and scented are three attributes describing this fruit, a seduction symbol found in several myths and legends.

It is available in many cultivars varying by shape and colour – conical or elongate, round, bright coloured from orange-red to intense red, with a pale to rosy flesh – and is an optimum choice for its taste and healthiness. Plants may either blossom once or many times throughout the year (i.e. remontant varieties) ensuring an extremely long season.

Two top-quality traditional agri-food products are marketed: the Cuneo strawberry produced in the whole province and the Bisalta strawberry grown in the ten municipalities at the foot of mount Bisalta. Product specifications require rigorous quality standards, eco-friendly practices, purity and authenticity, a high sugar and aroma content and meticulous checks before marketing. Every year, in June, Peveragno and other municipalities in the Roero district (Sommariva Perno, Baldissero and Monteu Roero) celebrate this fruit with great pomp and show by a Sagra della fragola (Strawberry Festival).



Kiwifruits

This is the 'latest born' in all senses, i.e. the latest product to be harvested in the fruit season and the latest product to be introduced into the province. Indeed, kiwifruit has many homelands. Naturally grown in the central provinces of China, its importance in the international market only grew with its arrival in its spiritual home, New Zealand. As far back as in 1940 the "Chinese gooseberry" became the kiwifruit to pay tribute to a local bird whose aspect and shape resembled this furry, brown and roundish fruit, with a very delicious pulp and a high nutritional value. Its high C vitamin content – twice the level of citrus fruit – makes it an excellent remedy for all ills.

This was the key to its success worldwide. It first hit the Italian market in the 1970s, and its sales have steadily continued to grow to record heights in the world market. It is also commonly known as actinidia, the scientific name given by the English botanist Lindley for the star-shaped arrangement of seeds inside – from *aktis*, ray, in ancient Greek.

The Cuneo province is among the major producing areas as here kiwi plants find their natural habitat in the extensive lower valley – with its milder climate – stretching from the Cuneo plateau, through the Saluzzo and Fossano plain to the municipalities of Barge, Bagnolo, Lagnasco and Verzuolo. The prevailing variety is the big-sized, elongate Hayward.

It is harvested in the second half of October and is ready for consumption from late November to late spring as its flesh gradually changes from stiff to tender and sweet.



Apples

The elixir of life, this is how this fruit may be termed with its detoxifying properties and high vitamin content. No doubt, it is one of the most promising fruits in the Cuneo province with tens of indigenous cultivars, although current production concentrates on a few varieties consistently compliant to organoleptic requirements, whose ideal habitat – which contributes to their unique appearance and scent – is along the foothills, at an altitude between 300 and 800 metres above sea level, among the highest levels in the European fruit growing industry. Terrains here are permeable and not exposed to fog or humidity retention, with an intense solar radiation and an ideal day-to-night temperature range.

Ripened in the bright sunlight between August and October, apples turn flaming red. Hues vary between red and yellow, variegated with green and brown. Good looks are only half the story; taste also counts with a crisp and juicy, more or less sugary and occasionally sour pulp depending on the variety: Golden Delicious, Grigia di Torriana, Ambrosia or Canadian Rennet. The limelight is for the Mela Rossa Cuneo (Cuneo Red Apple), the latest fruit to be entered in the PGI register (with a yearly output in excess of 600,000 quintals and 58 involved municipalities). It comes in 4 varieties (see above).

