

Buon appetito

Emilia-Romagna (Italy)

The “borgotaro boletus”: a treasure from the Apennines

The Apennine ridge extends for about 1300 km, forming the backbone of the Italian peninsula. Along the border between Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany, in the area between the Provinces of Parma and Massa-Carrara, the landscape of the Apennines is very varied, summarising in itself many of the typical aspects of the Northern Apennines. This area, that coincides with the homeland of the “Borgotaro Boletus” - a treat for the palate -, is the birthplace of scientific studies that, since the 50's of the last century, led to the current geological reconstruction of the Apennines and a revolution of knowledge in the field of stratigraphy, structural geology and paleogeography. The considerable geological and morphological complexity of this area gives rise to a composite landscape defined by striking contrast.

Gentle, often cultivated slopes alternate with badland erosions (calanchi), with conspicuous cliffs which are darker in colour and formed by ophiolites, and imposing rock reliefs above, covered with thick forest. On the slope and valley floor, the rocky substrate is

mostly formed by Scaly Clays (Argille Scagliose): chaotic complexes in which the clay matrix incorporates various sizes of calcareous, arenaceous, marly and ophiolitic rocks. Inside them we find rocky complexes which, by virtue of their great resistance to erosion, form the peaks. These are both vast portions of Cretaceous-Paleocene Flysch (Mounts Gottero and Molinatico) and the Oligo-Miocene Epiligurian sandstone (Mount Barigazzo).

The Cretaceous-Paleocene Flysch deposits consist of compact alternating argillaceous-arenaceous and/or marly-calcareous layers, regularly stratified and, in some areas, characterised by complex system of folds, joints and faults. The stratification pattern is clearly visible in steep escarpation, being only slightly masked by the thick vegetation. The Epiligurian sandstone is stratified sandstone which creates a landscape defined by reliefs, often with tabular morphology or grags, bordered by wooded slope.

The rocks which make up this complex landscape formed between 175 and 20 million years ago (Middle-Upper Jurassic to Lower Miocene).

The geographical area of production

In 1996 the «Borgotaro Boletus» was with the designation I.G.P. (Protected Geographical Indication) by the European Commission. This mushroom grows in the woods that cover the rocky slopes of the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines in the municipalities of Borgo Val di Taro and Albareto (Parma Province) and Pontremoli (Massa-Carrara Province).

The woods of the I.G.P area are typical of the Apennines, with oak and chestnut trees in the lower altitudes and beech wood and artificial fir-wood in the higher end towards the ridge. The form of care and the type of treatment of these woods greatly influences the Boletus production as these conditions, in turn, create the microclimate of the undergrowth. The age-old silvicultural activities of forest owners, who treat these woods with passion and expertise, contribute positively to the growth of the Boletus, the most famous and prestigious in the world. For this reason this product should be considered as a «spontaneous product helped by man».



Maria Carla Centineo works for the Geological Seismic and Soil Survey (SGSS) of the Emilia-Romagna Region (Italy). Since 2003 she is involved in the programme of communication and dissemination of the knowledge acquired by SGSS in the fields of geology, soil, natural resources and risks within Emilia-Romagna.

Soup of “Borgotaro Boletus”

Serves 6 generously

8 ounces of small mushrooms
Toasted croutons
Onion, carrot, celery, 1 potato
Chopped dried mushrooms
Olive oil and butter
Beef broth,
1/2 pint of cream

1

- Clean the mushrooms, thinly slice the chapels and a part of the stems, grate the other party.
- Put oil in pan, butter and chopped onion, celery, carrots and dried mushrooms. Gently fry over moderate heat and then add the sliced mushrooms and grated with salt and bring to a gentle heat.

- Add broth and potatoes boiled and mashed.
- Keep boiling for a few minutes and add the cream.
- Serve with toasted croutons.

2

Nutritional value

This typical mushroom soup, very rich and hearty, contains a good proportion of all the major nutrients (carbohydrates, proteins and fats) and many minerals, vitamins and fiber, especially potassium, phosphorus, selenium

and copper, vitamin A and B, from the mushrooms and the vegetables used for the preparation. Moreover the use of onion, with its very significant sulfur molecules, acts as a detoxifying agent and protects from heart disease.