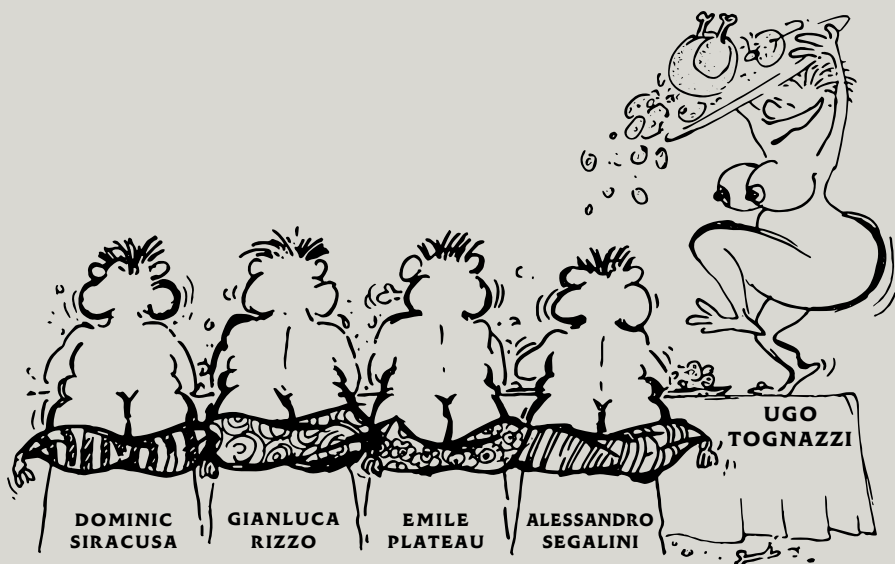
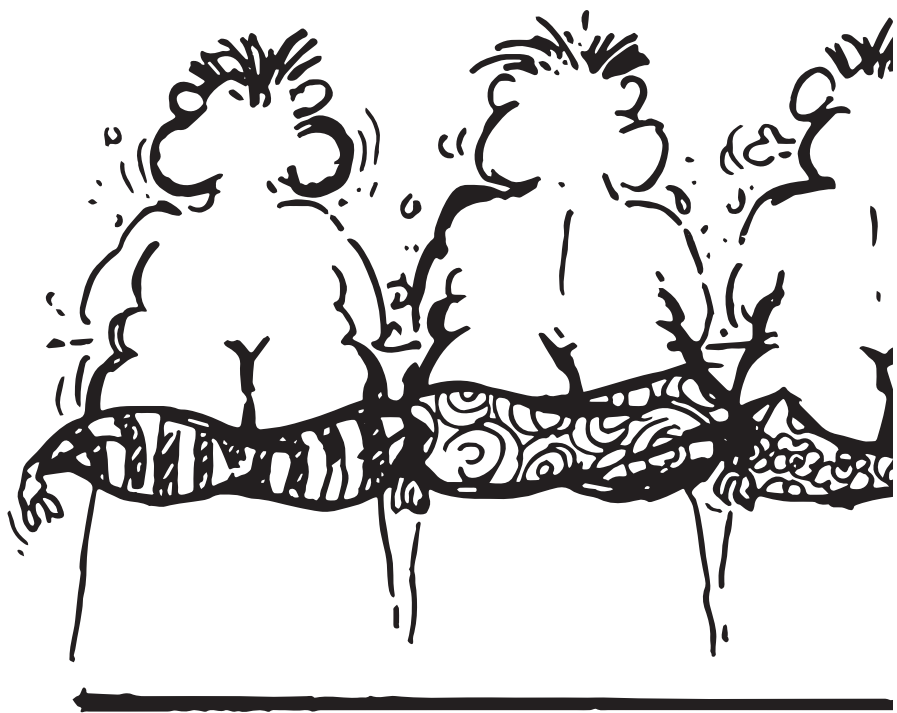


# The Injester



A BOOK BY CONTRA MUNDUM





Ugo Tognazzi feeding a white goose  
& some ducks in his farm, Velletri.



Photo by Marisa Rastellini / Mondadori (1970) / Getty Images





UGO TOGNAZZI

# **The Injester**





UGO TOGNAZZI

# The Injester

Laugh Out Loud Stories  
& Recipes To Die For



Translated by

Dominic Siracusa & Gianluca Rizzo



Contra Mundum Press New York · London · Melbourne

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# **The Injester**







# **Preface**





At my home in Velletri we have a huge fridge that defies the rules of consumer society. It's not one of those big Philcos, a spectacular polar white pot-bellied refrigerator. Instead, ours is made out of wood & takes up an entire wall in the kitchen.

Through its four windows you can peek into its insides and rejoice at the site of cold cuts, cheeses, veal, sides of beef, hanging majestically from shiny hooks.

This fridge is our family chapel.

Every now and then, in the morning, my wife catches me kneeling before this idol, this totem of the human adventure. I'm down there rapt in contemplation, waiting to receive an inspiration for lunch...

This image, certainly paradoxical, gives you an idea of how ascetic my attachment to the prosaic pleasures of the table is, and thus my attachment to life. In fact, when all is said and done, I shall be regarded as a martyr of the hearth. Although, generally speaking, rather than my own flesh, I lay down, with infinite care, little milky veal chops over burning coals.

Cooking is in my blood. And there, I think, one will undoubtedly find red & white cells but also, in my case, a substantial amount of tomato sauce.

I'm addicted to the stovetop. I suffer from acute *spaghettitis*. For me, the kitchen is the most arousing part of the home.

No one understands better than I do Quasimodo's hermeticism: for a pale olive, I could *really* lose my mind.<sup>1</sup>

I know the back doors and the best cooks of the most renowned restaurants in Europe.

Acting? Sometimes that seems more like a hobby. Eating, on the other hand, I do that full-time.

And I really feel alive before a pan. The sound of frying oil is music to my ears. I wish I could use the scent of a good ragù as an aftershave. A plate of tangled fettuccine or the oblong shape of a roast are, to me, vital sculptures, worthy of Henry Moore.

After making dinner, my greatest satisfaction is getting the approval of my friends and fellow diners. Now that I think about it, from cooking, I get something I used to get on stage and that now, with cinema, I'm missing: a direct contact with an audience.

As I indulge in this love of food I suffer neither middlemen nor rules: I'm the creator of the scene and its performer, the deity that transforms the inert words of a recipe into a flavorful & colorful reality, harmonizing and measuring the ingredients, sensing, even emotionally, when things are perfectly cooked, participating viscerally in the frying of potatoes, suffering with garlic in boiling oil, rejoicing in *soffritto*, basking in every sauce,

1. It is a common misconception that Salvatore Quasimodo (poet, 1901–1968), noble prize laureate, was the author of the line “For a pale olive, one can lose their mind.” Actually, the line belongs to Renzo Laurano, the pen name of Luigi Asquasciati (1905–1986), writer, journalist, and bon vivant. The line was then used in a comedy by Giovanni Mosca (1908–1983), who might be the source of misattribution.

losing myself in the smells and aromas, loving the tiny leaf of basil that was just picked, sacrificed on a mound of steaming maccheroni in tomato sauce.

My cooking is artistic. I suffer for it like few others do. And that's why the scenography that accompanies it is so important to me, the atmosphere that surrounds it, that entire flow of pleasant sensations that come from memory or the environment, & which influence heavily the dish before you, enriching it with ancient and new meanings.

Just as every object whispered distant & half buried memories to Proust, food reminds me of times lost and found again. And a boiled chicken, for instance, brings me back to grandma, to Sundays in Cremona, to mustard; and fresh raspberries conjure up those ancient & rare vacations in the mountains with my parents.

Greed, gluttony: silly words, dictated by current morals, punitive and masochistic. Everyone is free to make their own choices, even to die stuffed with foie gras or consumed by intercourse. Let's bring to light these two great, healthy, and materialistic passions, too long confined to the ghettos of sinful behavior. Let's exhume the epicurean ideals that preached joy, life, and that made great the Roman world & the Renaissance; let us wholeheartedly reconnect with the uninterrupted and secular flow of drool, sperm, and shit; let's return, especially when it comes to food, to that place that's becoming evermore elusive, beseeched by armies of preservatives, frozen foods, and tin cans.

Once upon a time, there was a grandma, a mother, a field, a vegetable patch.

Let's recreate them. It's up to us.

Now that the spiel is over, a few necessary warnings. This volume is made of three parts.

The first, which I entitled "auto-gastro-biography," includes a series of memories that deal with different times in my life, from the furthest away to the most recent. Starting from autobiographical premises, I wanted to write a few *tranches de vie* in which, as it often happens in everyday life, food is present in one way or another. To a gastronome like me, talking about myself through food was the best way, perhaps the only way, to build a narrative.

The second part is comprised of the easiest of my recipes; I love simple cooking, the kind that doesn't take too much time, even though I'm a stickler for details & a perfectionist even when it comes to making spaghetti with butter, or frying an egg. I warn you that you might already know some of these recipes – also because I divulged many of them, every week, through the microphones of *Gran Varietà*<sup>2</sup> – but I'm certain you'll discover

2. Gran Varietà was a radio program broadcasted by RAI (The Italian Public Broadcasting Company) between 1966 and 1979, every Sunday morning between 9:35 and 11 AM. It included comic sketches and songs and was one of the most popular programs of the '60s and '70s.

something more, or maybe less, or just different, that will help perfect, if I say so myself, their execution & therefore the final products.

The third and final part of the book is devoted to *La Grande Bouffe (The Big Feast)* & the recipes for the dishes shown in the film. A dazzling finale of fireworks that won't fail to satisfy your imagination & most of all your palate.

All that's left is for me to wish you a happy reading and *Buon appetito* with

Ugo Tognazzi





# **Autogastrobiography** **(Visceral Confessions)**





## 1935 Grandpa Mustache

There's a Cremona I know pretty well, made up of small streets, paved with river rocks, with a thin strip of cobblestone down the middle. A Cremona that doesn't exist anymore.

A long time ago my Grandpa Mustache would push his wooden cart up and down that strip of cobblestone; on it were two big metal cans filled with milk, one on each side, so as to keep balance, for the cart had only two wheels and there was always the chance it could tip over, or even lift Grandpa Mustache up in the air with him still holding onto the two front poles.

At the center of each wheel of this green wooden cart, there was a peg I would often stand on to take a trip around our neighborhood in Cremona, as Grandpa Mustache yelled toward windows and into the wind: "Iiilk!" which meant "milk!"

Among my childhood memories this remains one of the most fun. At that time cars were mythological beasts and the trolley was a luxury for a lucky few. Getting around on the peg of one wheel of that cart, painted green like the trolley, was much better than walking on foot. Especially since, every now and then, Grandpa Mustache would let me sound the brass trumpet. In short, I was a cart-mounted trumpeter.

We would stop at every building entrance, at every front door. Grandpa Mustache's cry would echo through

the halls, up the staircases: “Iiilk!” I would add that final touch with a long blow of the trumpet. Then all the women would come down with their little pots & my grandpa, using a ladle, would pour the milk into a measuring cup and then into the pots.

It was a thick kind of milk, slightly yellow, that tasted more like milk than any other milk I’ve had in my life.

The day before it was sold, the milk would sit in a cool room that opened onto the courtyard of Grandpa Mustache’s house. It was a typical Cremona house, one of those that are about to disappear for good: that is to say, one of those country houses that once stood on the outskirts of the city, but that are not part of the old city center.

At night, in that cool room, I would help Grandpa Mustache keep flies off the milk. That was fun too. He would give me some money for every 50 flies I snagged.

Then there was a milk that Grandpa Mustache would churn into butter, but only for his own use. That one attracted a lot more flies, partly because the cream was thicker and therefore more appetizing; and partly because that milk was stored in those large copper plates that made great air fields for the flies to land on, compared to the smaller openings of the metal cans.

Grandpa Mustache always seemed happy to sell milk door-to-door. He got satisfaction out of pausing at every entrance. It was as if he lived with all the people in the neighborhood, he knew their business, fears, desires, sorrows, joys. He always had a kind word for everyone,

☞ everyone would always have a word for him. He knew who was sick, who had just given birth, who was cheating on their wife, who had just left, and who had just returned. It was as if, everyday, he read a few pages from that thick novel: life.

Unfortunately, at one point, for reasons of public hygiene, Grandpa Mustache had to give up his cart. They made him sell his milk in a shop.

Far from being a step up, this was a source of great pain for him. It was as if they had locked him up in prison. In my memory, when he had his cart, his mustache curled upwards; contrarily, as he was standing sadly behind the counter of his milk shop, the ends of his mustache drooped downward.

He wasn't happy that his clients came to find him; he felt like a convalescent at the hospital being visited by a number of relatives. And, on top of everything else, he couldn't stomach the fact that the milk had to be bottled, boxed, ready to be delivered. Not being able to use his measuring cup frustrated him. He felt like a sculptor that could no longer use his chisel. He didn't last long.

Then one day he decided to sell the milk shop and open a coal shop. Perhaps, in his naive way of looking at things, he wanted a radical change, including the color of the goods he sold. From white to black. I think he chose to sell that specific product as an antithesis to milk because he felt coal, at the very least, would never be sold in a can. And what's more, you can't see flies landing on coal. He hoped he could go back to using the measuring

cup, selling the coal from his cart door-to-door... Boxes, progress, technology be damned.

Instead he died, poor grandpa with his drooping mustache. And it was because of a box. A box filled with explosives. A bomb that got into his bedroom & killed him in his sleep.

Technology always had it out for him, poor grandpa with no more mustache.

## **Recipe For A Dessert Made With Milk, That Is: Crème Brûlée**

### *Ingredients*

12 eggs

Vanilla Extract

One liter of milk & a bit of cream

Sugar

This was grandpa's favorite dessert when his mustache still curled upwards.

In fact, this dessert would make anyone's mustache curl.

In a bowl, place 12 yolks & add 12 spoonfuls of sugar; whisk lively, as if making a zabaione, add 2 teaspoons of vanilla extract, the cream and milk.

After mixing well, pour everything in an oval shaped oven dish, lightly greased with butter. Let it rest for half

an hour, then remove the light foam that forms on the top. Place in the oven, in a bain-marie, and cook it for 40 mins at 400 degrees.

When firm, remove it from the oven & cut off the slightly burnt crust. If this step proves too difficult, let it be, that's how I do it.

In a small pot, melt 8 tablespoons of sugar into a caramel. Pour it on top, and put it in the fridge until it's time to serve.





# **Recipes**

**(For any clarifications,  
call 1-800-UGO-TOGNAZZI)**





## **Black Truffle Crostini**

As a member of the “Order of the Fuscella” (the fuscella is that special hoe used to dig up truffles when the dog starts scratching in the right spot); as an honorary fellow of the “Truffle Brotherhood”; as well as a close friend of the Urbani brothers, who are the most renowned truffle hunters in Italy, and the monarchs of Scheggino in Umbria, I feel compelled to share a few truffle recipes with you. I’ll start with these delicious crostini, for which you’ll need the following ingredients:

- ✧ Black truffles (canned if out of season)  
or truffle paste
- ✧ Anchovy fillets (one fillet for each truffle,  
or two for each spoonful of truffle paste)
- ✧ Extra virgin olive oil (the bright green kind,  
if possible)
- ✧ Garlic, two cloves
- ✧ A tiny pinch of salt
- ✧ Soft white bread (or an Italian loaf with  
crust removed)

Coat a pan with olive oil, add the two garlic cloves and sauté them, after smashing them with the palm of your hand. Let them golden, pressing them with a fork to get all the juices out, then remove them and throw them away.

Take the pan off the stove and let it cool for a few minutes. In the meantime, slice, or better yet, grate the truffles. Mince the anchovy fillets and add them to the pan, which by now has cooled, mixing everything with a fork. Then put the pan back on the stove on low heat. Add the grated truffles, or the truffle paste (or both of them, since you could use half and half), leave it on the stove for a few minutes without letting it fry and add just a tiny pinch of salt.

Meanwhile, brush the slices of bread with olive oil. Brown them in the oven and then spread the mixture on them. Serve the crostini to your guests before sitting at the table, while still warm, on a tray.

## Green Gnocchi

You'll need a blender for this one. If you don't have a blender, you're screwed.

Two hefty handfuls of basil, a bundle of parsley, ½ stick of butter, 1 cup of heavy cream, & a tiny little piece of garlic. It goes without saying that you'll have made the gnocchi from scratch beforehand.

Boil them while you blend the ingredients mentioned above. If you blend long enough you'll get a sort of unified mix. Add the glass of heavy cream and blend again until smooth. Salt & pepper and the sauce is done!

Drain the gnocchi, dress them with another ½ stick of butter, and add the sauce.

If you don't like it, you're a lost cause.

## Caribbean Risotto

Pretend you have on hand some shrimp, baby squid, and clams fresh from the Caribbean. Instead of going down to the fish market, buy all this stuff from the freezer section, which besides being a whole lot cheaper, is also the safest bet hygienically.

*For 6 people*

1 pound of risotto rice

$\frac{3}{4}$  pound of shrimp (peeled)

a dozen baby squids (cleaned & chopped)

$\frac{1}{2}$  pound of clams

1  $\frac{1}{2}$  sticks of butter

2 tablespoons of tomato purée

Lemon zest

Now there's one problem: you'll need a pot of fish broth. Ideally you'd use a scorpion fish but I doubt you'll find it frozen. So let's do this: if you can't make some broth out of fresh fish, make any broth, even vegetable. As you can see, I'm easy.

Now for the preparation. In a large pot sauté the onion, sliced thin, using  $\frac{1}{2}$  stick of butter, then add the tomato purée. Add the baby squid and keep stirring until they soften. Now it's time for the clams. As for the shrimp,

## Austerity Frittata<sup>25</sup>

*Ingredients* (absolutely not imported)

4 potatoes  
 1 medium sized onion  
 ¼ pound of smoked pancetta  
 1 cup of milk  
 A little butter  
 As much oil as needed  
 6 eggs, obviously  
 Salt & pepper

In a pan with some butter fry the potatoes, which you've thinly sliced beforehand. To help with the frying, every now and then add a little milk. The onion, finely minced, goes in another pan and is sautéed in butter. Cut the pancetta into thin slices and fry it a third pan.

In a mixing bowl, beat the eggs and stir in the potatoes, onion, and pancetta. Using a fork, mash and mix everything with the eggs. Salt, pepper, and the frittata mixture is ready. The most difficult part is frying it. Do you know how to flip a frittata? You should see me when I flip mine. I'm magnificent. Remember to always use a lid, never a plate, when flipping a frittata.

Always eat them hot.

Or completely cold.

25. Tognazzi is referring to a very specific time in history: the 1973 oil crisis. In order to cope with skyrocketing energy costs, the Italian government issued a number of drastic measures that limited the public's ability to travel & consume certain goods.

## Oregano Meatballs

In times of austerity it's fashionable to substitute ground beef for beef-beef, which is very expensive. I want to follow suit, suggesting a small & economical kind of meatballs.

You'll need  $\frac{3}{4}$  ground beef,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ounces of prosciutto, a dinner roll without the crust (any kind you can get your hands on), which you'll soak in milk to better mix it with the beef. Add an egg or 2. This is an easy one; I believe all housewives have prepared it at some point in their lives. Later I'll tell you how to prepare a sauce that will make these taste even better.

In a pan melt 5 tablespoons of butter &, one by one, add the meatballs, lightly floured, frying them on each side. When cooked, remove them from the pan and let them rest on a paper towel, keeping them warm.

Now to the sauce, which will first require 1 small, easy step: with a fork, try to remove the butter solids from the bottom of the pan where you fried the meatballs. Then add 2 more tablespoons of butter. To brighten up this sauce, add a shot of dry marsala wine, let it evaporate, then add a pinch or 2 of oregano, depending on your taste. The sauce is ready. Put the meatballs back in the pan with the sauce and cook thoroughly. Naturally, if the sauce starts to dry, add a few tablespoons of hot water, perhaps mixed with a little bouillon. That's about it.



## **Mom's Spinach**

I'd like to tell you how my poor mother made her spinach. Yes, it's done the same way you do yours, but ...

First off, my mom cooked it slowly in butter, very slowly, on very low heat, and she added a pinch of nutmeg along with the usual salt and pepper. Toward the end she would add  $\frac{1}{2}$  glass of milk, also very slowly, a bit at a time. When the milk completely evaporated she added a bit more. Then she'd throw in a handful of grated Parmigiano. In short, she used all the ingredients that go well with spinach.

What do you want me to say, mothers are always the best cooks.

## Spinach Salad

Since you now have a bunch of spinach, rather than cooking all of it, set a little aside. Wash it thoroughly, because we'll use it for a nice salad that is well known to some, but perhaps a novelty to others.

½ pound of smoked pancetta, cubed. A handful of walnuts. 1 ½ ounces of Gruyere, cubed, 2 slices of white bread, or even regular bread. Then, some oil (which is optional, I'll explain why), some vinegar, salt & pepper.

The dressing is prepared as follows: in a pan, sauté the cubed pancetta until crispy. Do the same with the bread slices, which you've previously cubed. Mix everything with the walnuts and Gruyere, and toss it into the spinach, adding oil, vinegar, salt & pepper. Alternatively, you can substitute the oil with the fat leftover from cooking the pancetta.

This recipe wasn't my mother's. It was my aunt's.

## Strawberries In Vinegar

In 1946, every time I went to a restaurant that had strawberries on the menu, I would ask them to bring them to the table without any dressing and then I would tell the waiter, as if joking: “Could you bring some vinegar?”

When I would say “vinegar,” both the waiter & the owner would think I was crazy and stood there in disbelief, wondering what I was up to.

I would splash the strawberries with a teaspoon of vinegar, sprinkle them with sugar, mix them well, then eat them.

Almost always the waiters would squint and grimace: but then they got curious and I would have to let them taste my strawberries. Almost everyone would then admit they were excellent. That’s because strawberries cancel out the taste of the vinegar, leaving behind only a bit of acidity. In turn, the vinegar draws out the strawberries’ juices, making them softer. Consequently, strawberries finally taste like strawberries.

After so many years, I’ve noticed that this invention of mine is on the menus of many restaurants, which present it as a refined dessert of their own creation. Yet those are the very restaurants where I, while on tour all over Italy, had asked for “my” strawberries, by now one of the most popular dessert items. I’m surprised they haven’t called them “strawberries à la Ugo.”

## La Grande Bouffe

Let me start by saying that *La Grande Bouffe* was the most different, the most over the top, the most fantastic experience I've ever had in the world of cinema, not only for the atmosphere that was created while filming, but also for the film itself, one of the most unique films ever made, where food was part of our roles as actors, just as our acting was inextricably tied to food, & even perhaps directly determined by it.

When we arrived at the old villa in downtown Paris, you could see how it kept its distance from the other buildings, fully aware of its own decay; an old house whose neglected garden was like a faded ostrich boa wrapped around the walls to hide its wrinkles from prying eyes, so it could wither and die while holding onto a shred of dignity.

We immediately noticed the strange atmosphere of disrepair, for which the script had already primed us. We were going to die, one after the other, within those walls.

That didn't prevent us from inhabiting the space. Piccoli, Mastroianni, Noiret, and I asked for a couple of rooms on the top floor where we could gather during breaks to rest and, more importantly, digest.

During the first 3 days of filming we noticed that Ferreri, the director, asked us to say stuff that was nowhere to be found in the script. In fact, he would encourage us to make suggestions and come up with our own lines, scene after scene. This helped us overcome the barriers that an actor's ego inevitably erects.

We created a perfect climate, which might be impossible to ever replicate again. From then on, we never felt cheated if another had more lines. We got into a friendly competition based on perfectionism & selflessness. We got to a place where each of us cared more about our colleagues' performance than our own.

That's when we decided to tear up the script. While Ferreri was out in the garden setting up a scene, the 100-page script, torn into small pieces, rained above him.

The movie was being shot in chronological order, from beginning to end: it had become clear that we were going to make it up day by day, all together.

So for an 8 AM call, the cook Fauchon had sent us to prepare the day's menu needed to show up by 6: it would take at least 2 hours to make the gastronomic script we would later perform before the camera.<sup>26</sup>

Once on set, rather than discovering the scenes we were about to shoot using our eyes, we would see them with our noses. We would smell the aromas coming from the kitchens and we could tell what was in store for us. "Fellas, today, we're performing kidney bourguignon..." Mastroianni would say. Or: "Today's role is boiled meats..." And Noiret would add: "Too bad, today I could have really pulled off a great cheese soufflé!"

Our arrival on set was marked by aromas. Depending on the smells saturating the air, we knew what destiny awaited us in the scene we were about to shoot.

26. Fauchon is a French gourmet food & delicatessen company founded in 1886 & regarded as one of the temples of French cuisine.

Things were off to a great start. What's better than arriving at work in the morning and immediately smelling the food you would eat a few hours later? However, quite often, we would end up eating that fantastic food at 7 PM, rather than a few hours later, thus enduring a mortifying fast that we would often break by sneaking off to a nearby trattoria for a nice lunch. We rarely skipped a meal. Instead, we sacrificed our figures.

As the production moved forward, we felt as if we were hooked on food; excited at the need to constantly stuff our faces.

Yet the most extraordinary thing was this: the film, which is not a film about gastronomy but rather about consumer society, about existential crises, about human nature, about lack of faith, about everything, magically grew as if in a kind of parthenogenesis. A climate of desolation slowly overtook the set without us knowing it, a step at a time, day by day. At one point, all these aromas coming from the kitchen started to be less pleasant and, as time went on, they became quite nauseating.

All of us knew we were going to die. As the production continued, whenever a certain food was a harbinger of someone's death, the others were affected too: a purée no longer tasted like purée, in spite of having been impeccably prepared by Fauchon's cook; it started tasting like decomposition.

And then, without us realizing it, chaos ensued, that same chaos everyone can clearly see in the film. After so many scenes of pantagruelic meals, leftovers, half-eaten

cakes, & gnawed bones were strewn about everywhere. And the house was constantly visited by curious flocks of chickens, turkeys, and hens that came to feed on delicacies way more refined than their drab daily corn. No reason to be surprised; it's not like chickens & turkeys roam the streets of Paris like pigeons do elsewhere. It's just that we had, in a corner of the garden, our own reserve of generic animals, meant to perform, after make up & a quick trip to the oven, the most important scenes of the film.

All these animals running around the house, which we never bothered to shoo away, started to slowly turn our villa into some sort of country hovel. Halfway through the film, we had already started to unravel both physically & spiritually. Then another magical thing happened.

In the film, Mastroianni winds up frozen at the wheel of the Bugatti that he desperately wanted to start despite the polar temperature that night, and then we, at dawn, discovered he was dead, finding him there, stone cold, with an empty stare, covered in snow. Then the scene everybody remembers took place. After that, Marcello was done, since, as I already mentioned, the film was being shot chronologically, and that was its greatest strength. The next day, Marcello left early and, arriving on set, we couldn't find him anywhere. Noiret, Piccoli, and myself were the only ones left... We couldn't help but feel a sense of loss, a certain angst... A few days later, as the production moved forward, it was Piccoli's turn, and he left us with that horribly physiological death. The next

morning, done with his scenes, Piccoli disappeared from the film's plot as well as physically from the set. In that room on the top floor he had shared with me, his bed was left untouched. His things disappeared, gathered by compassionate hands.

That day, Noiret and I, the two survivors, sadly did our make-up. And I asked, in the most natural tone: "What happened to Piccoli? ... And Marcello? Where are they?" In a daze, Noiret answered: "Well, they died..." "Oh yeah, right..." I said. The atmosphere was straight out of a Pirandello play. And we couldn't help but fall into this strange mood which had slowly seized us and which we couldn't shake.

We would stare into each other's eyes and see the other's vague sense of fear. One day, Noiret whispered to me: "When are you going to die?" "Tomorrow..." I replied. He looked lost. "I'll be alone..." he said, as if to himself.

When we shot my last scene, Noiret was by my side, affectionately spoon feeding me, accompanying me to the very end. As he looked into my eyes, he seemed almost to implore: "Please, don't die... What will I do all alone?..."

I couldn't stay to keep him company on the set. Paris beckoned, with all its temptations & a hundred famous restaurants. He died alone, poor Noiret, and we were only allowed to see his final scene when the film was finished, during a screening about twenty days later. All four of us were together again. Our reactions were curious but also very human.



When we saw each other we hugged enthusiastically, perhaps too enthusiastically, given we had only been apart a few weeks. And we understood that in those effusions there was the strange joy, the unbelievable happiness, the primordial gaiety of being reunited with a friend we thought was dead.

## Oysters (scene 19)

This was certainly the most revolting feast of the film. Mastroianni and I, as we shot the scene, gobbled down at least 30 each.

It was a competition between Marcello and I to see who could eat the most in the shortest amount of time. I won't describe its disgusting conclusion. The film production provided a doctor & a vet on set.

The vet was there to check the oysters as they were being shucked, while the doctor checked the actors after they stuffed themselves. My suggestion to bring in a jeweler as well went unheard, in spite of my high hopes of finding a pearl or two. We ate the oysters raw, and that's what I recommend you do too. Remember the simple & well-known squirt of lemon juice.

It's true you can buy different kinds of aromatic vinaigrettes, but I wouldn't recommend using them, nor does Veronelli. However, I do use a little pepper, while Veronelli doesn't. I slurp them down between mouthfuls of whole wheat bread or, better yet, black German bread, lightly buttered. Veronelli doesn't.

For your edification, and to prove that when it comes to the kitchen I'm not a simpleton, I will now list the best oysters in the world: Armoricaines, Cancales, Belons, Ostende, Gravettes, Marennes, Arcachon.

## **Pâté de Canard** (scene 89)

My “last supper” of *La Grande Bouffe*. In the fiction of the film I die swallowing the last spoonful of this pâté. In reality, I almost committed suicide three times after failing to prepare it.

Thus, without taking any responsibility for this recipe, I’ll transcribe it here as it was given to me by the chef of a famous Parisian restaurant.

### *Ingredients* (for 10 people)

a two-pound duck, possibly wild, or even a mallard

½ pound of lard

¾ pound of pork loin

1 cup of fortified wine (Port, Madera, or Marsala)

Some dry white wine

2 shots of cognac or a nice brandy

3 or 4 chicken livers

Some bouillon

Thyme, bay leaves, carrots

1 truffle

A tin of foie gras

An egg

Oil, salt, & pepper

### *For the pâté crust*

2 cups of flour

2 ½ sticks of butter

2 eggs

*And finally*

enough packets to make  $\frac{1}{2}$  quart of gelatin

And now:

Debone the duck placing the bones in one oven dish, the meat in another, and, on a plate, the filleted breast, the duck liver, & the chicken liver, which you'll marinate overnight using part of the fortified wine and a shot of cognac or brandy. To the meat dish add the pork, cubed, the lard, chopped, the aromatics (thyme & bay leaves), splash generously with white wine, add the rest of the fortified wine as well as another shot of cognac or brandy. Let it marinate overnight and sleep on it. The next day, use the bones you set aside to make a broth; add the carrots, the bouillon, a bit of olive oil, salt & pepper. Let it cook for about 3 hours on low heat so as to obtain a bowl of "broth concentrate."

Meanwhile, prepare the dough for the pâté making a crust with the flour, the 2 eggs, melted butter, salt, & a little water. Let the dough rest for a couple of hours, wrapped in a humid towel.

Remove the meat from the marinade (not the livers) & pass it through a grinder twice. Set the marinade aside and after returning the minced meat to its dish, add, cautiously, a bit of the broth and the marinade, which you have previously passed through a sieve. I said cautiously because you don't want the dough to become too wet.

Roll it out into a rectangular shape big enough to fill the pâté mold (it's best to get one of those that has

a latch for easy opening) and so it rises about an inch above the sides.

Roll out another piece for the lid of the pâté. On the bottom, spread out a layer of the minced meat (about half of it); put in the duck filet, still dripping, the duck & chicken livers, mixed with the foie gras, and shape it into an even layer. Top it with the remaining minced meat and cover everything with the dough lid. Poke a hole in the center and insert a little funnel made of aluminum foil so the steam can escape. Beat an egg and brush it over the surface of the lid. Put it in the oven at 300 degrees & cook for about an hour. Be careful not to burn the crust. Before releasing it from the mold, let the pâté cool completely. Before putting it in the fridge for a few hours, don't forget to do the following: dilute the gelatin with a few drops of the fortified wine & delicately pour it into the vent you opened in the lid. Remove it from the form half an hour before serving, and bring it to the table with white toast & butter curls on the side.

*Public Service Announcement*

It'd be faster to catch a plane to Paris, go to Fauchon's, and return with a pre-made pâté.

## **Andrea Cake** **(scene 72)**

Make a large short crust about half the size of a woman's bottom.

Roll it out into a circle on a wooden table. Pick up a woman from just under her armpits, set her onto the shortcrust (bare assed), and push down a little.

To keep her warm, kiss the woman while waiting for her form to be impressed into the dough.

Remove her butt, let the dough rest a half hour. Don't let the woman rest at all.

Place the dough with its new shape on a large plate greased with either lard or butter, sprinkle it with bread crumbs, cover the whole thing with wax paper and then place some dried beans on top. Put it in the oven for about 15 minutes.

Then add: pitted plums, pitted cherries, pitted and chopped apricots, cooked in a little syrup made of sugar and water.

Put it back in the oven for about another 20 minutes. On the stove, thicken the syrup used for cooking the fruit and pour it over the cake after taking it out of the oven.

While it cools, continue to keep the woman warm.

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At his home in Velletri, the actor & gastronome UGO TOGNAZZI loved to gather friends, family, and colleagues, entertaining them with his extravagant theatrics. In preparing those legendary feasts, he would often stroll through his garden in search of artichokes & other seasonal delights; visit his chicken coop for fresh eggs; or reach into the massive family fridge that dominated his kitchen, which he considered the “family chapel.”

This book was born out of his passion for food and his experiences as one of the protagonists (along with Michel Piccoli, Marcello Mastroianni, & Philippe Noiret) of Marco Ferreri’s film *La Grande Bouffe*.

Between childhood memories, clever culinary recipes, and movie set anecdotes, both happy & sad, the great Ugo teaches us how eating well is one of life’s most exquisite pleasures. How could anyone disagree?

UGO TOGNAZZI (Cremona 1922–Rome 1990) made his acting debut with the Wanda Osiris Theater Company, then formed a successful comedic duo with the future TV personality Raimondo Vianello. His film career started in 1950. In 1961, he directed & starred in *His Women*. Between 1963 and 1988 he worked mostly in satirical cinema, acting in movies by Marco Ferreri (*The Conjugal Bed*, 1963; *The Ape Woman*, 1964; *The Wedding March*, 1966; *The Big Feast*, 1973) & by Dino Risi (*I mostri*, 1963; *Torture Me But Kill Me With Kisses*, 1968). He also created the two celebrated series *My Friends* (1976–1985) & *La Cage Aux Folles* (1978–1985). His performance in Bernardo Bertolucci’s *Tragedy of A Ridiculous Man* (1981) won him the Palme D’or for best actor at Cannes. An amateur soccer player & life-long fan of Milan FC, he also loved to play tennis, but his true passion was food, so much so that he was often featured as a recurring guest & gastronomic adviser in many popular magazines.

