

Marija Hajdić

Gradski muzej Korčula

Korčula

gm-korcula@du.t-com.hr

Conference paper

Received: September 06, 2007.

Accepted: October 01, 2007.

In the Kitchen and at the Table of an Urban Family in Korčula – an Incentive for the Research and Preservation of Nutrition Customs

Museum items testify with their layered significance to the cultural and economic past of the environment where they were created and utilized. Traditional items used for the preparation of food as well as the organization of work of those times are presented in an authentic kitchen room in the attic of the Municipal Museum. In the salon of those times, on the second floor of the Gabrielis palace there is an exhibit of the imported items used to serve and consume food prepared in the kitchen. It can be assumed that life in the palaces of the city was organized in such way that the dishes and the cutlery produced locally matched the kitchen ambient, while representative items were used in the representative part of the palace. Thus, the whole process from the purchase to the preparation, serving and consumption of food is documented by the museum exhibits. When the conditions for an adequate exhibition of the items are met, the exhibition rooms will be made complete with items that will furnish the impression of authenticity.

Key words: Tradition, kitchen, custom

The exhibition of multimedia records created by recording the food-related events through the year will make the visualization of food possible in the Municipal Museum.

The nickname „Bonkulović“ is used to term the Korčula islanders as admirers of good and chosen food, which should be accepted as an incentive to collect all kinds of museum inventory and documentation related to food and to present it in a museum exhibition. The memories of the senior citizens of Korčula are especially important, as they are the preservers of the city's collective memory with whose fading all the traditional cultural and historical values of life fade. One of them is Anđelina Goravica who remembers the *cafeteria* of *šjor Tode Pomenić* where *cukaro de orzo* and *bruštulani mindoli* were sold. The coffee house was at one time situated in the Gabrielis palace – where the Museum is located today. In Edita Ziegler's diary dated in 1934 she records that she enjoyed *nješpule*, grapes, walnut brandy and *kodonjati* (quince jelly) on the terrace of the Kapollo villa. In Vicenza Depolo Beor's cookbook a recipe for quince jelly (*kodonjata*) is preserved, while the molds for its preparation, once owned by the Šteka family, are kept as a part of the museum's inventory. Bequeathing history to younger generations and promoting tradition to further tourism is brought to realization by training those involved and interested who could prepare food and various fruit liquors in the replicas of the preserved traditional dishes, following the preserved old recipes. On the list of dishes one should surely have *pašticada* with homemade gnocchi and meat sauce (*šug*), fish prepared in traditional ways and different kinds of traditional korčula cakes: *klašuni*, *cukarini*, *spomilje* (i. e. kisses), *hrustule*, *prikle* (donuts), *lojenice*. The last preserved cylindrical appliance with spiral rifles and with handles which was used to prepare *cukari di orzi* (small candy) is kept in the St. Marcus Abbey's vault. Starting with the term *cukari di orzi*, we arrive to the existence of the need to record the localisms, words once by our 'grannies' which belong to our childhood, and fade out from everyday speech. These are: *pasabrod*, *bronzin*, *lavadura*, *škovacjera*, *kukuma*, *slatko od pira*, *dešpik*, *lasanjar*, *sedita*, *škancija*. After a heavy lunch people would say *puste pjatance* (cleaned plates). The use of this one, and other localisms causes misunderstanding in everyday communication with the migrants and today's generations of Korčulans, who use the standardized dialect. The word *kukuma* has an additional metaphoric meaning besides meaning a coffee pot, meaning a kind of person who is not capable of getting everything correctly: She's a real *kukuma*! He nickname *bruštulin* is also common, also derived from an appliance used to bake coffee while *manjamukte* is used to describe persons who have a habit of inviting themselves to free meals – or persons unable to perform duties they were assigned to. With the proverb 'eyeing meat, forking a potato' one denotes a person who is confused and momentarily can't follow what is happening around her. Therefore it is necessary to record all the meanings the words possess.

The saying 'Love is not octopus soup' is also interesting. It is because the water left after boiling an octopus is considered useless and thrown away. Unlike that, love is precious and has to be kept.

A wooden appliance used to make elongated thin pastry like spaghetti, is kept in the old kitchen in the Municipal Museum. According to Srećko Kušurin, nephew of the late Antica Cvijić who used to use the appliance, the pastry was made when the wind blew from the north (*bora*) which would hasten drying, while the *južina* (*šiloko/scirocco*) would work against it.

There are some sayings on the topic of eating associated with older citizens. An example is šjora Tona who would prepare a *double salsa and some meat* whenever she could, which eventually turned into her nickname. These expressions carry the notions of the older way of life in Korčula.

Gatherings around the table formed a part of the religious and nonreligious customs during the year. It is necessary to collect records of these faded customs, their varieties, as well as those customs still followed today.

On Holy Thursday the priests would gather in the palace (the parish house) and the twelve elected high brothers of the All Saints fraternity – the ‘disciples’ whose feet would be washed by a priest, and the *gaštaldi* – the heads of the three civil fraternities of Korčula. The usual menu would consist of horseradish, two apples, vine and a spring lamb roast. In the still recent past a head of the fraternity would have to prepare a past (from Italian *pasto*, meaning a rich lunch) for all the members of the fraternity. Priests who would perform blessings of the homes would meet at the „*vižija Vodokršća*“ (the night before Epiphany) in the house of the head of a fraternity every other year, and the heads would meet in the years between. The custom was changed so these days the gatherings take place at a restaurant.

In these times the members of a fraternity meet regularly after the *procesjun* (the Good Friday procession around the city center) when *prikle* (pinches) and wine are served, and after the procession ‘over the hills’ in the early hours of Holy Saturday. Considering that the members of the fraternity of St. Rok take a special part in the evening service on Holy Saturday, with a short procession in the cathedral carrying a statue of the Resurrected Christ (Redentur), which is called Gloria, they meet after that service in the hall of the house of their fraternity. All the fraternities organize luncheons on their patron saints’ days.

After the closure of the religious service on the occasions of celebrating various events and anniversaries, there would be a *tratamenat* (treating). The inhabitants of Korčula and their guests would treat themselves with various small homemade cakes, juice and wine. One of these treatings held after the First Mass of the last Abbot of Korčula, Don Ivo Matijaca stands recorded in the diary of events kept by Antun Glavočić.

Some of the nonreligious festivities which involved food preparation were the wake on the eve of May Day and the Day of the *kanjac* in July, when those taking part in it would compete in fishing and preparation of the fish.

The usual food which would be eaten during the relaxing sailing towards the *škoji* (the nearby islets in the Korčula archipelago) was recorded in the poem: *Iz škoja se vraćamo lustrani ko zemlja i od naših užanci i ovo je jedna. Piraka, kanjaca, lostura i manjaka to je manjaža naših škojara.* The inhabitants of Korčula are known to enjoy the *ježina* (roe of the female sea urchin) which is harvested out of the sea and whose presence shows there are no pollutants in the sea, and the *priljepci* (*lumpari*) which are picked, the sea snails *grci* which are collected and a species of shellfish called *modrujci*. While a knife is needed to pick shellfish attached to the rocks, a special tool, ‘*ježinjak*’ is used to harvest urchins, and their roe is always eaten with bread and high quality red wine.

On the *vižija* (from the Italian *avvizare* – to announce) of St Martin and on the saint's day people wassail and the lojenica cake is baked. Lojenica is recorded in the carol: „*Za ne povrč zakon stari blagovat će i lojenice ...*”

On St Barbara's day a cereal meal is cooked, with the song: *St Barbara cooks a meal with nine things* (kind of cereal).

A few years ago, on St Martin's day, a common gathering was introduced – to taste wines, and there were also competitions in making lojenica.

Verses about food are integral parts of the old Korčula New Year's carol: Those pig legs left over from Christmas, you better give to us than let the cat take them. Oh you home servant, is your master at home, give us some dried fruit to eat them till midnight. We passed by a pond and saw a fig tree. We tore our shoes by the time we found your house. We have a Marin here, give him a *cukarin*.

These days the Korčula carnival club is called *Bonkulovići*, coming from a traditional nickname for the inhabitants of Korčula, and one of their activities during the carnival is to arrange *pjatanaci*, a gathering of masked revelers with good entertainment and food prepared by the revelers themselves, which is then judged and rewarded.

An unavoidable part of Korčula's past were also the milk ladies from the nearby village of Žrnovo who supplied the Korčula townspeople with goat milk which they distributed to their houses, so that every house had its own milk lady. This was recorded in the song of the shepherd Mikota: Woman from the town, go to the devil, here comes Miko who sells you milk.

As the Korčula townspeople stored their wine barrels in the wine lodges, the doorsteps of wine cellars were often rounded in the middle, so that a wine barrel could pass through the door, while the crossovers over the town streets, had to be high enough for a wine barrel to pass through, as mandated by the town statute. This way the food and the preservation of foodstuffs were connected with urbanism and urban design, which once more shows the interaction of all aspects of life.

This interweaving of the spheres of life and other customs related with food will surely be presented in the future outlook of the Municipal Museum and the museological presentation of the old town center, considering the fact that they represent a significant segment of everyday life in Korčula, both personal and public.

A special feature of the Municipal Museum is the old kitchen in the attic of the Gabrielis palace. It offers to its visitors an insight into the everyday preparation of food and the organization of work in the kitchen – cooking, eating, and cleaning. It was arranged according to the museological program created by Cvito Visković, PhD around the opening of the Museum in 1957, while items originating from the old Korčula family houses are still being regularly collected. There is an open fireplace in the kitchen called *komin* where food was cooked and which was used for heating in the winter, and a lavatory made of stone called *škafa*. A table *trpeza*, *katride* (chairs) and a *sedita* (a bench with a backseat) which was also a crate used to store food; also, shelves and

a cupboard (*škancije i kredenca*) and a *muškadur* used to keep food. The dishes, which were homemade, were made of copper (ram). The kitchen has various dishes, like *ku-kume*, *prsure*, *pešijera*, *bronzini*, *ražan*, utensils like *bruštulin i mažinin* (used to grind and bake coffee), *rominča* to draw water, *mortari-avan* to grind sugar. A mold in the shape of a lamb used for the Easter cake is a rare surviving specimen of this item. When this cake would be baked and after it's cooled down, it would be speckled with powdered sugar, to look as much as possible as the thing it represents. Coffee beans serve to represent its eyes. All these items are listed in the inventories of the old Korčula family houses, and also in the lists of the assets of the Donadini family in the early 19th century. Taking into account the fact that Museum keeps old collections of recipes to prepare food and produce wines, the kitchen exhibit will be enriched with the copies of its recipes and the food prepared following those recipes. When better conditions for exhibitions are ensured, after the renovation of the Museum, the kitchen will be furnished with the artifacts that would be found in the kitchens and larders like a bunch of *lumabarajski pomidori* (a kind of smaller tomatoes usually put into soup), dried herbs for teas (*mažurane*, *metvice i popunca*), *kolač* (a string ring of dried figs and lavender), dried lavender and a bottle of *dešpik* (vinegar with lavender), a medicament used if an inhabitant felt faint.

A traditional refreshment of the Korčula inhabitants will also be presented – a dried fig in whose center a *mindol* (almond) is put, which is served with a small glass (*bičerin*) of homemade herb brandy and sugared lemon and orange rind. *Dekot* will also be exhibited, a medicament made of cooked dry figs, ground almonds in the crust and pieces of dried carob and sugar used when someone has a cold.

In the cultural and artistic the everyday life of an urban Korčula family is exposed, while its dishes and crockery show their wealth and status. All of these items, who would find their place on a table of a wealthy family, were imported from abroad. A few dishes were preserved, plates and cups of glazed colored maiolica from the 18th century and a great number of various glazed ceramic dishes with printed patterns, made in the Cardiff manufactures in the 19th century, like plates, eating sets, teapots, cups and jugs. This crockery was acquired by the sailors from Korčula, and in the 20th century it was resold by traveling salesmen and was thus found in many Korčula houses. A few pieces are of Japanese origin. A great number of glasses and bottles owned by families Boschi and Dimitri in the 18th and 19th centuries were also found, often with engraved initials of their owners. Eating utensils are also regularly mentioned in documents. In the less affluent houses it was made of iron while the wealthier had silverware. When the fact that in the testaments and in dowry documents only one, two or at most three pieces of silverware were listed is taken into account, it is obvious that they were considered very valuable.

This emphasizes even more the silverware made in Venice with the engraved initials of their makers of which a couple of pieces from the set were preserved. The knowledge about everyday life in Korčula is complemented with a few pieces of eating utensils with ivory handles owned by the Fabris-Zanon family and the documents which concern the manufacture of silverware and golden ware in the Korčula gold workshops