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## The Cornucopia of the Senses

*a banquet without peer!*

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*The cornucopia of the senses -  
A banquet without peer!*



*By  
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The cornucopia of the senses – A banquet without peer!

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*A young Henry III portrayed with the ribbon of the order. The order Cordon Bleu du Saint Esprit, or The Order of the Knights of the Holy Spirit, as it is also called, was reorganized by Henry III on December 31, 1578.*

### ***Among Ionian and Doric columns***

We are in Venice. We are in the heart of the most beautiful city in the world! We are sitting in the National Biblioteca Marcian, located in a 16th century palace drawn by the Renaissance architect Jacopo Sansovini. The library, which is situated in the middle of an incredibly elaborate system of Ionian and Doric columns, was built in 1529 for the purpose of housing the Greek and Latin book collections with which Cardinal Bessarino Trebisonol endowed Venice. The neighbours at the Piazzetta are the pink and white Gothic arcades of the Palazzo Ducale, and there is an almost misty Byzantine glitter about the place, an atmosphere that tells a silent tale of Venice's magnificent epochs through its architectural coordination.

The place is a splendid backdrop for telling this unique story at the entrance to the most beautiful square in the world, Piazza San Marco. For here, on the edge of the square, is the library, also called Libreria Sansoviniana, with its entrance facing the Ducal Palace and the San Marco Basilica. We are here to study two historical works from 1574; two works that have caught our interests in recent years as we have found ourselves becoming increasingly seduced by the relationship between food and architecture. Here, at the library, where the documents have been retrieved from the long rows of shelves after two hours of waiting, we finally have before us a collection of texts that surpasses our expectations by far. We have already managed to uncover our preliminary keystrokes in an article published in The New York Times in October 1881. But to see, touch, and not least decipher the Old Italian scriptures completes our search. And, as we are beginning to realise, or perhaps we have always known, some of the explanations for the unique relationship between food and architecture, the meal and the event, are found right here among the impressive historical narratives and cultural treasures of Venice.

### ***The cornucopia of the senses – A banquet without peers!***

On the dark mahogany table in the library lie before us the historical documents describing the lavish banquet that was held in Venice in the Renaissance. More specifically, in 1574 as Henry III, King of France and Poland, passed through Venice with his mother, Catharina de' Medici, en route to Paris to assume control of the kingdom he had just inherited from two older and now deceased brothers. To mark the king's arrival in Venice, or "The Queen of the Adriatic", as Venice is also called, the city organised a sumptuous reception and banquet in his honour; a banquet whose rival has probably never been seen. The documents "Le Feste" and "L'Historia della Publica" written by the notaries Rocco Benedetti and Marsilio Della Croce in 1574 describe how a host of Venetian senators and aldermen had assembled by the Ducal Palace to welcome the king. They give detailed descriptions of how the assembled nobles and other aristocrats were dressed in grandiose robes of rich silk and how the king's gondola was covered with the most exquisite gold brocade. 60 Halberdiers liveried in orange silk and armed with historical battle axes formed a guard of honour.<sup>1</sup> 400 men rowed the royal ship as it approached the Lido followed by a plethora of noblemen's gondolas, which were also covered by gold fabric and decorated with mirrors and coats of arms. An exceptional triumphal arch had been mounted on the Lido along with an open loggia with ten Corinthian pillars at the front drawn by the architect Andrea Palladio; a portal to affirm the celebration of Henry III as a Venetian, which was decorated by both Tintoretto and Paolo Veronese.<sup>2</sup> Today, Andrea Vicentino's painting of this event can be viewed in the iconographic hall Sala delle Quattro Porte located behind the gothic arcades of the Palazzo Ducale, or the Ducal Palace as it is called in English. It depicts the king disembarking on the Lido to meet the patriarch of Venice, Giovanni Trevisan, along with Doge

<sup>1</sup> A halberdier is a person armed with a weapon called "a halberd", which is a 1.5 – 2.5-meter-long shaft with either an iron blade or an axe head and a spike at the end.

<sup>2</sup> In Denmark, too, it subsequently became fashionable to commission esteemed artists to create special arches of honour. Such an arch was created by painters Holger Drachmann and Carl Lorcher in 1907 at the inauguration of the Skagen Harbour.



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Andrea Vicentino's painting of Henry III's reception in Venice. The painting shows the king disembarking on the Lido with Doge Alvisio Mocenigo and the papal nuncio Cardinal di San Sisto, and it displays how the patriarch of Venice, Giovanni Trevisan, and six prominent procurators are walking towards Henry III with a golden baldachin. Notice that in a covered gondola in the foreground, a very beautiful woman is facing the viewer. She is a "hidden" key figure, namely the famous courtesan Veronica Franco who enthralled Henry III. Veronica Franco describes her encounter with the king in a small collection of letters (*Lettere familiari diversi*) from 1580 in which she also describes the miniature portrait she gave the king subsequent to their meeting.

Alvise Mocenigo and the Pope's nephew Cardinal di San Sisto. The painting gives an evocative insight into the scene in which numerous spectators and halberdiers are also present around Palladio's festive architecture.

Henry III was quartered in the unique Palazzo Foscari, which was built by Doge Francesco Foscari in 1453.<sup>3</sup> To mark the occasion, Palazzo Foscari had been decorated with all sorts of riches made from textiles and gold, and during the night, a floating glassworks on boats outside the palace window entertained the guests. There was no end to the splendour, but the evening banquet was still the most overwhelming event. It kicked off with a ceremony on Guidecca after which the royal gondola sailed towards Canal Grande to the accompaniment of music. At the stairs to the quay by St. Mark's Square, the king was greeted by twelve noblemen dressed in picturesque maritime costumes made from blue satin with scarlet red collars. Each of the twelve nobles was accompanied by a beautiful woman dressed all in white.

The banquet itself in the honour of the Venice-loving Henry III was held in the Ducal Palace. 3,000 guests were waiting in the inner courtyard, which was also decorated with a gold brocade and precious jewels. Outside, by the quay, there were glittering fleets of gondolas with torches and golden oars, and the characteristic banners at the front were wrapped in damask, which was swaying elegantly in the wind.

"A City arises from the Deep,  
A Vision from the barren Ground.  
A pining below for Beauty  
In Dreams from the Ocean's Mouth."

<sup>3</sup> Palazzo Foscari now houses the Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

Thus writes the Danish poet Holger Drachmann about Venice in his poem “Venezia”. Like so many other artists who have visited Venice, he was captivated by the city; a fascination, which almost turns into an obsession in some people – here meant in the most positive way; an obsession that has to be shared with others; share the enthusiasm, the experiences, the rush.<sup>4</sup>



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*One of the rooms in the Richelieu wing on the 1st floor of the Louvre has a display of original cloaks and other Cordon Bleu du Saint Esprit clothing.*

<sup>4</sup> This is exactly what the author and art historian Mogens Nykjær from Aarhus University does in his magnum opus: “Venezia” - Byhistorie og kunst”; a sublime historical portrayal, which is highly recommendable.

The impressive and exuberantly decorated Sala del Maggior Consiglio in the Ducal Palace, where the friezes depicting the Doges frame the ceiling, was the setting of the banquet at which more than 1000 different dishes and 300 sweet things were served on gold and silver plates. Before the meal, acrobats amazed the audience with precarious manoeuvres. It was a party without any restrictions, which was exceptional at a time when restrictions on food dampened gastronomic displays. But here, at this festive occasion, the material excess knew no restraints. The tables were lavishly set for the many guests, and a new and transgressive surprise had been prepared as a part of the royal entertainment; an event in which Henry III was invited to sit at a table where everything – from napkins to plates, knives and forks, yes, everything – was made of sugar. The result was so convincing that the king did not hesitate to take his seat. However, he obviously noticed that he had been presented the illusion of a meal the moment his napkin crumbled in his hand. The beautiful tableau was straight out of a fairy tale with a plate in front of the king bearing an image of the queen sitting on two tigers who wore on their chests the French and Polish coats of arms. To the right of the royal chair were two large sugar lions with Pallas Athene<sup>5</sup> and Lady Justice<sup>6</sup> as motifs. On his left were St. Mark and St. David, also made from sugar, and spread across the table were horses, trees and ships, all made from sugar. After the meal, the notaries testified that 1,260 such sugar figures were given to the female guests as souvenirs. Following this craftily staged event, the king was naturally seated at a more substantial table and served food of a more culinary nature.

*Miniature portrait of Louis XIV in armour wearing a Cordon Bleu du Saint Esprit ribbon. Miniature paintings in small, oval medallions that were worn as jewellery were common in renaissance portrait art. This miniature portrait was painted by Jean le Vieux Petitot.* ➤

<sup>5</sup> In Greek mythology, Athene was the goddess of wisdom. Additionally, she was the tutelary deity of the city of Athens and daughter of Zeus, and she was distinguished by her birth as she came out of Zeus' head.

<sup>6</sup> Roman goddess that corresponds to the Greek goddess Dike, both of whom are personifications of the moral force of the justice system.







Between the many courses, there were poetry readings and singing; fragrant plants and trees had been placed around the room, and fruit baskets hung from the ceiling; domesticated hares, rabbits and birds were tied to the trees with silk ribbons. The banquet lasted four hours, and 90 different dishes were served in front of the king. At the end of the festivities, a large pie was carved from which birds flew out for the guests to chase. The prize for capturing the biggest bird was a gilded ostrich egg; subsequently, the dancing commenced.

All the present noblewomen wore shining white silk, and expensive jewels and pearls adorned their bosoms, the nape of their necks, their shoulders and their hair. The French who were part of Henry III's entourage were so overwhelmed by their beauty that they requested permission to remove their black capes, the symbol of grief for the King's recently deceased brother, Charles, in order to be able to dance with the stunning ladies.

### ***Venetian cuisine, a wealth of contrasting tastes***

The banquet was later imitated greatly by private nobles and royalty, and it became common for a Venetian to spend 400 or 500 ducats on entertainment. The art of entertaining guests was taken almost to the obscene. For example, it became imperative to spray gold dust on every dish to provide it with “its own soul”.

This article is, however, also an exploration of the often unnoticed mercantile spirit that also characterises Venice. For even today, it is possible to see how the receptiveness of the city to outside influence still means that Venetian cuisine absorbs ingredients from Terra Firma – the Italian mainland – but also from much further away.

The development of the Venetian kitchen is particularly interesting in a historical perspective. It is a known fact that the capital of the prosperous region of Veneto – Venice – is famed and loved by the entire world for its art and architecture; but the Venetian cuisine is also a good cause for a visit. It is quite exceptional! It has been greatly influenced by centuries of trade with the East, a fact that has been very significant and stimulating for the culinary imagination and diversity of Venice. Venetian cuisine comprises themes for food including completely fresh seafood, the Jewish kitchen, herbs and exotic spices, yes, even wine and coffee. Here you will find local dishes such as small quahaugs in white wine, risotto with fish or chicken and, of course, shellfish, duck breast in sour-sweet sauce, asparagus with egg dressing in the spring, also the wild asparagus, bruscandoli, which Elizabeth David describes in her lovely essay, and, in autumn, delicious pumpkin chips and cherry pie.

Since the dawn of time, Veneto has served as a “buffer” between Western European and Asian traditions. Veneto’s, and in particular Venice’s, contact to the Byzantine was much more important than the

contact to local, neighbouring regions. The contact with the East thus formed the basis of what is still the essentials and the characteristics of dishes from the Veneto region: The use of spices. The traditional dishes of each province in Veneto contain not only pepper, but also clove, cinnamon and nutmegs along with golden raisins, sultanias, which often form a highly surprising contrast in sweet and piquant



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*The Order of the Knights of the Holy Spirit was endowed with a treasury comprised of two groups of objects: twelve objects made prior to the creation of the order, taken by Henry III from the Royal collections where they were described in 1561; and ten objects in gilded silver made during the reign of Henry III between 1579 and 1585. One of the rooms in the Richelieu wing of the Louvre has display cases with these unique renaissance treasures.*

dishes. Venetian cuisine in particular is full of contrasting tastes – sweet, sour and salty – due to centuries of contact with various Oriental cuisines.

Historically, the Venice of the year 1000 was one of the largest ports of the Mediterranean, and the city had the largest share of trade with the Middle East. The city traded many different products: rare metals, expensive textiles, jewellery, perfumes, ivory, incense, but, much more importantly, the aforementioned spices. Venice monopolised this trade as spices were highly valued in Europe, not only for the taste and medical capabilities, but also due to the fascination of the West with Middle Eastern culture; a culture which shrouded its food in elements of sensuality and pleasure, and which stood in stark contrast to the spiritual stringency of Christianity. From Alexandria to Damascus, the ships loaded their cargo holds and returned with pepper, nutmeg, clove, cinnamon, ginger and cumin. Raisins and pine nuts were brought from Corinth and Zante. In the 11th century, Venice started trading sugar, and had soon gained a monopoly, passed laws and made agreements with Egypt and Syria where the sugar was produced before selling it at outrageous prices on the Rialto Bridge.

The fact that Henry III travelled to Venice on his way back to Paris, and that this was where he was celebrated with a lavish banquet based on unique ingredients and served in an extraordinary way among numerous advanced sugar sculptures, gold brocades and rare species of animals, is hardly a coincidence. This could only have taken place in Venice; only in such a cosmopolitan city and at such a nexus of trade, art, culture and knowledge would it have been possible to unite architecture, form and gastronomy – and this by virtue of a sugar monopoly on the one hand and restrictions on the other.

### ***A Palladian menu***

Admittedly, this is not our first encounter with historical Veneto cuisine or these wonderful 500-year-old recipes. In the spring of 2009, we had revisited Vicenza to mark that 500 had passed since Palladio's birth, and we had visited the Teatro Olimpico, which was drawn by Palladio. The theatre was the master's final work, and it embodies a special synthesis of Vitruvius' classic architectural treatises, Alberti's theories of architecture, and the ideas of renaissance architecture. We had been sitting in telling silence on the large, old wooden stairs of the theatre gazing into the unique and fantastic theatre room; at the scene of the city of Thebes and its trompe d'oeil scenario – the room is a place of illusions!

Afterwards, we strolled, hungry and inspired, up the renowned Corso Andrea Palladio, the main street of the quiet and cosy provincial city of Vicenza. The main street clearly revealed that we were now in Palladio's hometown; the numerous 16th and 17th century palaces are located in close proximity along the main street and its smaller side streets. Every new place reveals another architectural, Palladian gem, and another one...

We had lunch at the Michelin restaurant "Agli Schioppi", which is run by the chef Enrico Bassani. The address is Contra Piazza Castello 26, and it is located on the corner of Piazza Castello offering the most exquisite of views of the more than merely unique Palazzo Breganze by Palladio. In spite of its Michelin star, one is tempted to designate "Agli Schioppi" an attractive little family restaurant, which offers traditional, regional dishes; snacks and simple, yet intense, meals of the highest quality. As a part of a collaboration between a group of local restaurateurs, a Menu Palladiene, a period piece Palladio menu, was created in 2008/2009 to celebrate the birth of the architect Andrea

Palladio 500 years earlier.<sup>7</sup> The menu is a contemporary interpretation of the food crafters of the past and an attempt to follow in their footsteps.

But why create a Palladio menu in a city such as Vicenza? Wherein lies the link between a classical, historical architect and the food of bygone years?

The obvious explanation in the rather commercial world of today is the immediate profit inherent in a wide array of cultural and experience related attractions aimed specifically at tourists from all over the world. Vicenza is, and has been for centuries, well-known for its magnificent palette of Palladio villas, palaces and, not least, his final work: Teatro Olimpico. In the union of food and architecture, the traditional Palladian cultural events are enhanced by a sensuous surplus value and also a good narrative through regional dishes based on produce from Palladio's time. It is an exciting stunt when it comes to aesthetics and experience, visually and in terms of taste.

However, a more thorough examination of Vicenza's initiative concerning gastronomy, experience and tourism reveals a more profound and significant point about the relationship between food and Palladio's architecture than the mere initiatives of the tourist industry.

### ***Andrea Palladio's kitchens***

Palladio's architecture is widely recognised, and especially his Vento villas rank highly on the architectural list of preservation worthy buildings. Innumerable architectural theory books and journals tell of the classic Vitruvian principles behind his architecture, be they focused on composition, symmetry or spaciousness. Many architectural theorists have described the basic principles for beauty, order

<sup>7</sup> The restaurateurs were organised in "Gruppo Ristoranti delle Risorgive". Andrea Palladio (1508 – 1580).



and comfort that Palladio and many others before him have used to sketch out their baronial stair towers, gardens and loggias. One room has often been overlooked, however: The kitchen. As opposed to dining rooms and ballrooms, the kitchen, being as it is one of the servicing rooms of the villas and palaces, has been given much less heed. But in relation to the dining room, the kitchen played an essential part in the early years of the villa. Along with many other architects, Palladio viewed the kitchen of a noble's villa or palace as being subordinate to the main rooms of the house; but, importantly, no less significant! According to the famous Vitruvian principle that had already served as a protocol for Alberti, comfort, beauty and durability were the most important requirements for a building, and a vital precondition for this was the correct disposition of servicing rooms in relation to the main function of the house and its representative rooms.

In the book “Cucine, cibi e vini nell'età di Andrea Palladio”, edited by Paola Marini, Paolo Rigoli and Aldo Dall'Igna, banquets in a nobleman's home were so generous that words such as gluttony, superabundance and profligacy spring to mind. This tendency is verified by Palladio's luxuriant and multifaceted kitchen decoration in his villas and palaces where entire walls were filled with all sorts of copper utensils, casseroles, pots and pans. In contrast to this was the “Leggi Suntuarie” protocol, which was issued by the Venetian council as a consequence of the wastefulness and was in force from 1500 to 1800. From 1450, it was thus forbidden to spend more than half a ducat per guest at a meal. During some parts of the 16th century, it was even specifically prohibited to eat pheasants, peacocks, partridges, turkeys, guinea fowls and freshwater fish; and, moreover, the amount of dishes was significantly reduced. At the time, the chefs and the people who cut out the meat had to take an oath concerning their lists

◀ *Paris has many treasures, but two rooms in the Richelieu wing on the 1st floor of the Louvre are particularly interesting as they contain a treasury of relics and suits related to Henry III and The Order of the Knights of the Holy Spirit. For example this large rock-crystal and gilded silver processional cross with garnets, emeralds and pearls.*



of food in front of the municipal authorities of the city. Breaking this oath was punishable by imprisonment.

Thus, there was a deep contrast between daily consumption and the preparation of food for banquets in the kitchens of the nobility at the time. From harsh restrictions to lavish banquets where Italian noble houses competed about who had thrown the most magnificent feast. It was to a great extent at the feasts that power was celebrated and consolidated, and the meal was staged with constant use of allegorical theatrical and musical performances.

Nowadays, as we have begun linking food and meals to events once more, and also to place new restrictions such as climate accounts on a meal, it gives food for thought that the biggest gastronomic revolution of the 16th century was not related to the content and component parts of the meal but to its form. This means that already at this point, focus was not on the content and ingredients of the meal, but rather on the meal itself where form and presentation were prioritised.

We are not the first to have juxtaposed food and architecture. In the middle of the 18th century, Bartholmeo Staffani wrote of good cookery that “...a compatible chef should have knowledge of both literature and mythology to be able to create ornaments and centrepieces...” in a book titled “L’arte di ben cucinare”. He almost refers to a select cultural and aesthetical awareness of shaping and performance, albeit situated in the universe of the kitchens, the dining tables and the plates of contemporary table decorations with objects and figures.<sup>8</sup>

*The Venetian word saòr actually means nothing other than sapore (flavour) and refers to the fact that the use of good wine vinegar serves to heighten the taste. In Italian, this little fish is called Sarda (Sardina pilchardus); its soft and smooth flesh goes wonderfully with the mix of onions, vinegar and raisins.* ➤

<sup>8</sup> Some of the more progressive cookery schools in Denmark have recognised this relationship; one might point to The Danish Meat Trade College in Roskilde, where they have begun working with the experience related dimension of the meal, and where they are facilitating the MadX (FoodX) initiative, and, additionally, Silkeborg Technical College whose visionary director is leading the way in terms of performance and events.



### ***Sarde in Saor, a Venetian Renaissance dish***

During the Renaissance, the major problem of cooking was keeping the food fresh. The refrigerator had obviously not been invented, and many of the elegant parties and fantastic banquets at the villas of Veneto and at the palaces of Venice were held in the summer, which caused the chef much difficulty due to large amounts and complicated dishes often having to be prepared several days in advance. Spices such as cinnamon and clove were therefore used in abundance to cover up the state of the food and the often obnoxious smells.

As previously mentioned, this was a point in time when Venice had monopolised most spices, and it is not only in relation to buildings and art that Venice has left a great impression on the culture of Vicenza and the entire Veneto region. Apart from the use of spices, souring or sour/sweet techniques with onions were used to lower the natural putrefaction process. Conservation was, moreover, also achieved by smoking, salting or drying the raw ingredients.

It is important to point out that some of the raw ingredients that are now considered among the mainstays of Mediterranean cuisine, such as tomatoes, aubergines, beans, potatoes and carrots, were virtually unknown. In Palladio's days, it was more common to use artichokes, parsnips, chickpeas, fava beans, millet and chestnut flour as main ingredients; raw ingredients that were all used in the Palladio menu at "Agli Schioppi" and in the common Palladio menus of many restaurants in 11 neighbouring towns last year.

Already then, the Venetian society saw making an impression and causing amazement as two of its purposes – a quality that was further corroborated as the years went by. Its cuisine still does this! We perceive that natural simplicity, innate gentleness and calmness as well as appreciation of freedom shape Venetian identity. And that the

Venetians, with a point of departure in their history, have developed a gastronomic style that fits their very special way of life between the ocean and the continent, between Venice and the growing world. Their food is still prepared in a simple way, but with flair, and the taste is enhanced by ingredients that represent a great deal of innovation through exploration and cultural influences, and where complicated combinations of sauces, spices and herbs are avoided. In this way, Venetian cuisine has always been modern. In Venice they say "parla come mangi," "speak as you eat," when someone is believed to be too pretentious or to be speaking "hot air" - a strong appeal to be more down to earth - but this does not exclude simplicity of a sophisticated nature.

The food is subject to seasonal changes; and among the archetypes of Venetian cuisine are dishes such as *Sarde in Saor*. While we are preparing our *Sarde in Saor*, we continue talking about Palladio and how one of his works has recently served as the basis of a work by the world famous architect Zaha Hadid. We are also talking about how Hadid installed two organic forms "Aura L" and "Aura S" in the small, yet unique, Palladio villa Villa Foscari or, as it is referred to here in Veneto, La Malcontenta, at the 2008 Venice Architecture Biennale.

They were installed in the Piano Nobile of the villa where they created an incredible contrast, yet, at the same time, a colossal harmony through the synthesis of Palladio's 500-year-old building and their shining and almost otherworldly forms.

Hadid extracted the two shapes from and in their contrast to Palladio's linear proportions and created a vibrant equilibrium of harmony.

Since the Renaissance, architects have sought to communicate beauty in their buildings. The idea was that a musical understanding of



◀ *The Villa Foscari La Malcontenta by Andrea Palladio was built for one of Palladio's wealthiest clients. The Villa Malcontenta was built during the 1550s, and in a way represents the transition of Andrea Palladio; the proportion of each room is in fact determined by a specific set of "harmonic" relations that are derived from the Euclidian mathematics practiced in the 16th century.*

*In 2008, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Palladio's birth, the internationally acknowledged architect Zaha Hadid was invited to initiate a dialogue between contemporary architecture and Palladio. Hadid focused on the rooms of the piano nobile, conscious that exploring the logic and relational system of a single room would have addressed and captured the essence of Palladio's architectural theory. The frequency curves generated by the harmonic proportional system of the villa are progressively transformed, through mathematical algorithms, to define a genotypic elementary form that contains in its DNA the whole Palladian set of rules. As a result of this experimentation, multiple complex spatial environments – 2 forms, "Aura L" and "Aura S" - are generated through lawful variations of Palladio's classical proportions. "Aura L" and "Aura S" are generated as spatial morphologies that reflect the structure of this void, the skeleton of this ethereal space, and presented as two "phenotypes" of the complex order generated by a contemporary translation of Palladio's harmonic system.*

harmony and the relationships between the underlying notes, intervals and chords could be incorporated in their structures. Palladio expressed it thus: “Proportions of the voice are harmonious to the ears; proportions of measurement are harmonious to the eyes. Such harmonies are usually quite pleasing without anyone knowing why;” or, to put it another way: Space should be to the eye as music is to the ear. It is known that Palladio used this notion of harmonious proportions to tie the rooms of Villa La Malcontenta together in his search for systems of harmony. His sense of proportions is equally evident in Andrea Vicentiono’s depiction of the triumphal arch and loggia for Henry III. The fact that the motif of Henry III’s reception has been given a place of honour at the Ducal Palace is testament to Venetian-European high politics.

The taste of the sweet sultana and the aromatic vinegar, the fragrant pine nuts, too, creates a sympathetic harmony and a unique contrast in the encounter with the crispy fish in our kitchen at the palace behind Calle Widmann and Campo Santa Maria Nova. We recognise that the former requires the latter and that neither of the two can stand alone. Something simple can thus be quite sumptuous!

This afternoon, we are definitely going to visit the Ducal Palace again. You see, on the wall of the palace, at the end of the enormous stairs, there is a memorial tablet that tells of Henry III’s visit, and anyone who has negotiated the main stairs of the palace has been able to read about those fantastic days in 1574.

Tenna Doktor Olsen  
Anna Marie Fisker





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*Sansovino's figures of Mars and Neptune preside over the Giants' Staircase (Scala dei Giganti) in the courtyard of the Ducal Palace. According to Sansovino's son, Neptune symbolises Mastery of the Ocean, and Mars symbolises Mastery of Dry Land; a fitting place for the Doge to be seen during the coronation ceremony.*



## ***Sarde in Saor***

### *Ingredients (6 servings)*

*1 kg peeled, cleaned, very fresh sardines*

*100 gr. wheat flour*

*Oil for frying*

*Salt, freshly ground pepper*

### *Onions:*

*1 1/4 dl extra virgin olive oil*

*800 gr. white onions, thinly sliced*

*4 bay leaves*

*1 tsp. black peppercorns*

*3 dl white wine vinegar*

Clean the sardines carefully, remove entrails and dry the sardines gently with a piece of kitchen roll. Sprinkle slightly with flour and fry or deep-fry them, a couple at a time, in plenty of boiling oil. A frying pan with tall edges is well-suited.

The fried sardines are placed on a piece of kitchen roll to drain the oil, spray with a bit of salt.

For the onion compound, heat the olive oil on the pan and fry the onions gently until they have a slight golden-brown colour. Pour in the wine vinegar and let it reduce significantly before removing from the heat. Place the sardines in layers on a deep platter and alternate topping with onions and sauce, which will make up the final layer. Pine nuts and/or sultana raisins may be added.

Leave the fish to marinate at room temperature for at least two hours before serving.

*Anna Marie Fisker and Tenna Doktor Olsen in a kitchen in Venice. Together with a team of skilled students, the authors have organised food culture courses – Food&Dreams – in Venice, where local dishes are explored and prepared by Danish course participants.*

*Visit [www.foodplusdesign.dk/foodanddreams](http://www.foodplusdesign.dk/foodanddreams) for more information.*

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We recommend the following literature:

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The story of Palladio and the cuisine of Venice and Veneto, of 500 years of architecture and meals - sumptuous and modest alike. Two Danish women, both of whom are members of the historical cultural order Cordon Bleu du Saint Esprit, which was reorganized by King Henry III of France, have travelled to Venice to investigate whether or not a common historical basis can be found for its architecture and gastronomy; and to cook in the footsteps of Palladio, Catharina de' Medici and her son. The history of Veneto and Venice in particular is long and very influential; the question is if we can draw upon its culinary traditions, also in contemporary cuisine?