

Vicentina Cod (Bacalà' alla Vicentina)

Provides: 12 servings. Preparation time: about 3 days.

Vicentina cod is a historical dish in the Palladio town. According to some documents, the origins date back to 1269; according to others the origin is from 1432, when the Venetian captain Pietro Querini, after shipwrecking on the Norwegian island of Rost, in the Lofoten archipelago, brought back to his homeland some stockfish, that is the cod air-dried without the addition of salt, as consumed by the local inhabitants. Since the dried fish was a very good alternative to fresh fish, which was perishable and expensive, the cooks in Vicenza created dishes based on this ingredient, until a simple recipe, always served with polenta, was created and became one of the symbols of the city of Vicenza. It is necessary to specify that only in the Vicenza dialect the term 'bacalà' (one 'c' only) is used to indicate the dried cod: this, in Italian, is commonly called stockfish, while 'baccalà' is used to indicate the salted fish. In both cases, it always refers to the species *Gadus Morrhua*, of the Teleostean order. The two types of preservation techniques are determined by the different climatic conditions in the fishing seasons. The cod that is caught in winter is dried for several months at low temperatures, on wooden racks, and exposed to the arctic winds until it appears, in terms of shape and hardness, like a wooden stock (i.e. stockfish). This is what then becomes the 'bacalà'.

Sources

Venerabile Confraternita del Bacalà alla Vicentina di Sandrigo (Vicenza): www.baccalaallavicentina.it

Acknowledgements

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Ingredients

950g Stockfish, soaked
140g Onions, white, sweet
750ml Extra virgin olive oil
25g Sardines, salted
300ml Milk, whole, pasteurised
70g Flour, wheat, type 00
5g Grana Padano cheese, grated
40g Parsley, fresh
1g Salt, fine
1g White pepper, powder

Preparation

Lay the stockfish on the chopping board. Beat it with a wooden hammer, and intermittently stretch the fish for about 15 minutes, until it becomes tender. Put the stockfish in a sink with running water, for approximately three days, depending on weather conditions (high temperature accelerates the softening process). Drain the stockfish, cut it open lengthways and discard the non edible part (scales, fins and bones), but not the skin. Add salt and pepper. Stuff with onions, previously chopped and stir fried in extra virgin olive oil (keep the olive oil for later use), flour, grated cheese, finely chopped parsley and sardines, previously de-boned and cut in small pieces. Close the fish and cut it into large slices approximately 6cm long and roll the slices in flour. Lay the slices one next to each other in a stoneware or aluminium pot and cover completely with the milk, the extra virgin olive oil used to fry the onions, and the remaining oil. Simmer, uncovered, on a low-to-moderate temperature for about 3 hours, without stirring, but being careful to always keep the fish covered with the liquid. Use a heat spreader to keep the heat even. This cooking method is called, "pipare", to indicate the presence of bubbles of smoke that erupt from the cooking dish like from a pipe.

To test that it is cooked, press a piece of fish on the side of the pot, with a wooden spoon: the bacalà is ready when it flakes easily. Traditionally, Vicentina cod (bacalà alla vicentina) is served with slices of polenta gialla (yellow corn porridge), making it a dish that is ideal for the cold weather.

Nutritional information per 100g of edible portion

Energy (kcal / kJ)	519 / 2146
Protein (g) (N x 6.25)	21.5
Total Fat (g)	47.9
of which saturated fatty acids (g)	8.0
Carbohydrates (g)	0.6
of which sugars (g)	0.2
Dietary fibre (g)	0.7
Sodium (mg)	289

Values obtained from laboratory analyses

For more information on Italian traditional foods contact: ISPO Molecular and Nutritional Epidemiology Unit - Florence www.cspo.it (Salvini); IEO Division of Epidemiology and Biostatistics - Milan www.ieo.it (Gnagnarella); the University of Udine www.unud.it (Pargnol); the National Institute for Food and Nutrition Research INRAN - Rome www.inran.it (Marietta, Camilli)

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