



*Alice and Giada's impressions
on the Comenius meeting
in Szikszo - Hungary*

We are Alice and Giada, the two Italian girls who represented Italy at the meeting in Hungary from 22nd to 25th September 2001.

Szikszo is a small but friendly town where we felt at home as soon as we got there.

We can say that it was a wonderful experience because we got the chance to meet the people who are taking part in the Comenius project and, at the same time, to visit a new country. All the boys and the girls there were very friendly and easy-going. Besides working and discussing together the new issue of our magazine, we spent our leisure time with our partners: so we understood what Hungarian life-style is like, how young people spend their week-ends and we realized that there are a lot of similarities and differences between our countries. We enjoyed Hungarian food which tastes like ours and we had a good time taking part in the vintage parade which reminded us of popular feasts still held in some Italian country villages. We also noticed that the Hungarians frequently go to *wine houses* on Saturday night and here they meet friends for a meal or a drink and they dance till late: in Italy we haven't got similar places.

We feel proud to have been some of the first European students who have been allowed to take part in a preparatory meeting financed with European Comenius fundings.

At the meeting we felt the responsibility of being the representatives of the Italian ambassador group being expected to suggest and discuss the topics for this issue of our magazine and make decisions on their behalf.

We are really very happy to have had this opportunity because, in our opinion, experiences like this help you grow up and mature, even if we were sometimes homesick.

We hope our school-mates have worked well and we wish they could be allowed to take part in the next meeting in Germany.

We'd also like to meet everybody again in the future and we feel sure we'll never forget this great experience!!!



Recipes, food and many other curiosities from the Middle Ages

When Alice, our ambassador, returned from her visit to Hungary, she told us that the topic we had to develop for the magazine was food.

At first the topic as such didn't sound very exciting so we decided to find out curiosities about food dating back to medieval times in order to make the topic more challenging .

We do hope you find our group work of some interest.



In the Middle Ages there were a lot of feasts and banquets during which food was served in courses.

Dinners and feasts started with food that was considered very digestible like soups or broth, bread (made from a combination of white and rye flour) and cheese (cheese was eaten both before and during the meal as an aid to digestion).

The meal continued by serving dishes which were more difficult to digest such as meat, in particular pork, the most popular meat among the majority of the population, chicken, wild game or beef accompanied by green vegetables and sauces.

A recipe of a meat dish is given below:

Chicken with fennel

Ingredients

*1 chicken
100g unblanched almonds
a handful of fennel seeds
a handful of parsley
1/2 l water
1/2 teaspoon fine spices
2 tablespoons of oil
salt*

Take the chicken, cut it up and brown it adding water and salt to taste; simmer for about 40/45 minutes. In the meanwhile, take the fennel seeds, the parsley, and the almonds that haven't been skinned; and chop them well, mix them with the liquid from the chicken, and boil everything. Sieve and add the sauce to the chicken. Sprinkle with spices and serve.

At the end of summer, when it was blackberries' time, this sauce was prepared to accompany meat.

Blue Summer Sauce

<p>Ingredients</p> <p><i>½ liter of blackberry juice, filtered</i> <i>50 g almonds</i> <i>10 cl apple vinegar + 5 cl (3tbsp) water</i> <i>1/3 tsp ginger</i> <i>salt</i></p>	<p>Grind the almonds with the ginger and put in a bowl with blackberry juice. Add water, apple vinegar and salt.</p>
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On meatless days, fish was served, and it was accompanied by nuts which were recommended for an easy digestion.

Wines and ales were consumed during the whole meal.

Sweets were served for last.

A typical Italian cake, dating back to the Middle Ages, is **Panforte**.

This cake comes from Siena, in Tuscany, a town not far from the place we live in.

It's for this reason that we want to give you some historical information about the origin of this particular sweet we eat during the Christmas feasts .

This traditional round sweet is based on candied fruit, honey and spices such as cinnamon, nutmeg and coriander. The name Panforte means “*strong bread*”, and it is of course connected with its strong spicy flavour.

Panforte dues its origins to the servants and tenants of the Monastery of Montecellesi in Siena at the beginning of the 13th century. Monks required them to supply them with “*Panpepati e Mielati*” (pepper and honey breads) to pay their tithe. Little by little, this cake passed from the monastic tables to the shelves of spice mongers who were the only one who knew the recipe.

Many years were to pass before Panpepato was prepared by the cooks of the nobles from Siena.

In 1832 Virgilio Saponi, a descendant of a family of spice merchants, began to produce Panforte for the city and the surrounding area.

During the 19th century Panforte began to be appreciated throughout Italy and, later on, all over the world.

And now.. some curiosities about how tables were laid in Medieval times and many other things

In those distant days, the kitchen was very large and generally it had a circular plan: here servants and nobles ate together, because the dining room was only in the monasteries and it was called refectory.

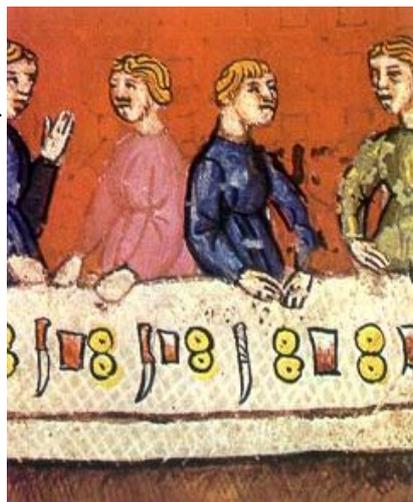
In this period meals started being eaten sitting on stools or benches. Tables were rectangular, long and covered with a white double table cloth. Over it, there was another thin table cloth, which was used to clean hands and mouth, because napkins didn't exist in those days. Little by little people

began decorating the table by adding plates, glasses and knives to cut meat.

Forks with only *two prongs* were introduced only later on: they were used only by rich women, because for men it was a sign of weakness.

Each seat was marked by a soup-plate, where sauce and liquid food were put. Meat or fish, instead, were set on a slice of bread, four fingers thick. Only rich people had knives.

The main meal was served between seven and nine o'clock, in the morning, whereas dinner took place at about five o'clock, in the afternoon. It was only after the 10th century that the main course was postponed to ten, and a light breakfast was introduced at about seven.



By Alice, Andrea, Chiara, Elena, Eleonora, Federica, Letizia, Marta, Martina, Teresa, IIB/L

TUSCAN COOKIES IN THE RENAISSANCE



In the following centuries other recipes originated in Siena. They were first produced by ancient families of spice merchants. Their names, Saporì and Parenti, have become very popular symbols of these cakes which are still a Christmas delight.

One of Saporì's most popular cookies is Cavallucci. They are solid, chewy anise cookies and have been made since around the 16th century. The name means "little horses" since they were originally made for those who worked in the stables. They are tasty, especially with a glass of Vinsanto!!



Why don't you try to make them? It's easy. You need:

Ingredients:

5 cups plain flour

1 3/4 cups sugar

1 ounce (about two tablespoons) honey

1-ounce anise seeds

about 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder

about 2 tablespoons walnuts

about 2 tablespoons of candied orange peel

about 5 cups of water



Dissolve honey and sugar in 4/5 cups of water and simmer until the syrup drips from the spoon form threads, then stir in the remaining ingredients (knead the baking powder last) until you have a fairly stiff dough. Let it still for a couple of hours, then roll it into a 4-inch diameter cylinder, cut into inch-long pieces and shape them into balls. Flour them lightly, put them on a lightly floured baking tin and back in a 160-180°C oven until they are lightly browned. They should be dry, but chewy. Let them rest for a day in a tin before serving them.

By *Giada, Martina, Alessandra, Anastasia and Caterina IVC/L*

11. 9. 2001 In the USA two planes, hijacked by some terrorists, crashed into the Twin Towers: a lot of people died.

Here are the personal feelings widespread among the students of IVC/L:

- ◆ All the images on TV seemed to be taken from a blockbuster movie, they seemed to be the result of horrific imagination. Then we realized that reality may be even worse than fantasy .
 - ◆ *Giada, Veronica, Gaia, Marcela.*
- ◆ On September, 11th our sense of steadiness and all our certainties collapsed miserably, just like the twin towers in New York. The invulnerability of the greatest and most powerful nation in the world crumbled down.
 - Erika, Anastasia, Martina, Manuela.*
- ◆ On the day of the attack all the TV programmes were interrupted and only the news were on. I was shocked by the phrase “third world war” which was used on that very day. I could not understand what they were discussing about and I felt scared. Now I still hope they were exaggerating and that things may be solved in peace.
 - Nubia, Valentina, Alessandra.*
- ◆ Terrorism is the use of violent and illegal actions for political aims, to force people to act especially because of the fear it causes. According to me, after the attack against America we mustn't change our habits, we have to look ahead and be brave, to respect and love each other deeper than ever.
 - Erika, Ylenia, Francesca.*
- ◆ I am very afraid that a spirit of revenge may rise from this tragic event and provoke other victims. Human life is very precious and we cannot solve problems by killing people. We think that respect for human life must prevail on any other feeling.
 - Elena, Juderka, Valentina, Caterina.*

7. 10. 2001 The answer against terrorism began. What will happen in the next few months?

Here are the most significant answers collected by the students of III B/L

- ◆ ETULIA, AGED 78, GRANDMOTHER - *When the II World War started, I was 16 years old and when it finished, I felt old: I was 20 years old. I had lost the best years of my life.*
- ◆ DANIELE, AGED 51, MECHANIC - *In my opinion the terrorist attack to America, will mark human history: it's a terrible act, which has brought forward a big power, like the USA. I don't know what the right way to do justice is, but I think that the present war is not the best instrument to solve this problem, caused by political, economical and religious reasons. Now, only people are dying and citizens' fear increases!!! Where will we end up????!!!*
- ◆ FRANCESCO, AGED 18, STUDENT - *According to me, America's sadness for the implosion of the twin towers is, in a certain sense, in contrast with the fact that the Americans don't care if millions of people die in many parts of the world. Well... I don't want to say that the terrorist attack was a good action, but also the violent reaction against Afghanistan has been a mistake: they should have waited for a possible pacific answer from the Talibans.*
- ◆ MARTINA, 16, STUDENT AT HIGH SCHOOL - *Well, I think that the problems won't be solved by war; dialogue and mutual understanding are the best “weapons”*