

# **The Carrier Bag of Recipes**

**(Title still under construction)**

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## **A recipe to write a thesis about recipes**

### **To find the answer for the perfect recipe.**

Seek the right ingredients: herbs and spices, magic and health, disease and illness, yolks and pigments, good manners and behaviours, rituals and habits, bodies and objects. You might want to research the origins of a specific dish. Books and essays are great for finding inspirational guidance.

N.B.<sup>1</sup> You should adjust your recipe to circumstance and mood. It could be quick, fruity and refreshing, or it could become a stew, warm and comforting.

### **Always listen to your gut – or stomach.**

Where should you look for your ingredients? Shop local – walk around your neighbourhood. Always bring a tote bag with you. You might discover a Turkish shop or a local market, perhaps filled with not-so-pretty fruits and veggies. Observe the ingredients from a distance and let them whisper to you. “What’s that?” Get closer, touch it and bring it to your nose to help you to understand if the idea has ripened enough to be used. Always smell the stalk. If you can recognize the sweet notes or the mild bitterness of its specific characteristics, take it! If you are not sure, ask the farmer, the bread lady or the librarian to help you. Avoid supermarkets or any places where things are unnecessary wrapped with plastic. Those sparkling layers might trick you and throw you off in your research.

If certain ingredients are difficult to find, ask yourself where and how can they be replaced locally and seasonally?

### **Let the ingredients scatter over your workstation.**

This is the time to decide the tools you want to use: you might need a pot full of examples, a wooden spoon to help you stir your ideas, or a double-pan scale to compare the cases. A knife and a cutting board will help make it all come together. A colander and a grater are fundamental for making things sharp and ready to puzzle together.

### **Bring some water to boil.**

Define the origins of each process, whether oral or written. Where does this recipe originally come from? Could you familiarise yourself with this food? Have a

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<sup>1</sup> An abbreviation for the Latin phrase *nota bene*, meaning “note well.” It is used to emphasize an important point.

closer look at the structure. Ingredients, quantity, time, sequences... Can you follow the instruction? Are your hands already dirty? Footnotes and blank spaces are relevant too; allocate them a specific container.

**Bubbl... bubbl... bbblublubl... bubbbblubl...** as to move with a rippling flow, the way water bubbles down the side of a small garden waterfall. A stream burbles as it travels along its bed, bubbling over rocks and branches. The verb burble captures both the movement of the water and the sound it makes as it moves. You could also say that a brook or stream or river babbles or ripples – or even trickles<sup>i</sup>.

Containers are very important. Their wide opening waves at you, looking at you, and they are there for you. They are everywhere, they surround us, and yet we forget to fill them with references and meanings. Don't be shy, give each ingredient a specific receptacle. The glass jar is for the wet mixes, for those fluid notions, which might be hard to mix properly at first with the small dry particles of text. You need to observe and judge with your eyes if the substance contained in the clear glass is transforming into the elastic and soft dough you want. The aluminium bowl is for dry and synthetic references. Ceramic bowls are for herbs, which must be cut with the tips of your fingers. N.B. Do not use a knife to cut fresh herbs!! Contact with a metal surface will make the herb oxidase faster and lose their freshness. After all, what's better than the smell of sweet basil stuck in that intimate aperture of your nails? They become brushes filled with smell, blending flavour and matter.

Leave the pots on the fire and let them simmer overnight. Remember to cover them with a lid; you don't want your sleep to be interrupted by unusual odours, and you definitely don't want to reduce the matter of your texts.

**Bubbl.. bubbl...bbblublubl... bubbbblubl...**

The place surrounding the fire is whispering to you. Uncover the pots, and with your hands, help the rich and flavourful vapours to reach your nose. To do so, place your fingers close to each other (like a cup), and position the hand behind the rising column of steam, with your palm facing your face. Bring it gently towards you. Enjoy as the cup wafts humid thoughts into your nose.

When ready, bring all the pots (still covered with the lid) to a table. The surface should be clear, big enough to allow you to have everything in front of you. Uncover them one by one and take your tool of choice – maybe the soup spoon works better when the substance is a liquid and too fluid to catch, alternatively, the spaghetti spoon

is useful when the dish consists of many linear and deep roots. You might find it easier to use a colander to help drain off some of the excessive theories.

**Tasting is very important.**

Using your fingers, take the minimum amount necessary for the maximum of flavour. N.B. Really do use your fingers. If you use a spoon or another utensil, you cannot tell the temperature of the matter, and you risk burning your mouth. Also, this way the body does not interfere with the temperature of the substance as much as a cold, dead, metal spoon would. You will immediately know if it's too hot to introduce into your mouth. And frankly, who hasn't licked their fingers to catch that last remaining bit of flavour.

If the substance is odd, you might need to stir it well. Occasionally, meaningless expression – that lighter matter that floats above the rest – can form a layer after being untouched for a very long time, much like a layer of dust that covers a long-untouched book in a silent library. Others pots might need some crumbs, or a sprinkle of powder definition. Listen to your mood, spice it up or make it bitter.

**When the flavours are ready, it's time to mix.**

N.B. We are aiming to ensure that by the end of the text, the reader is left with a sense of fulfilment.

## What is a recipe?

“The recipe is a set of instructions to carry out a process of transformation in general, which through various alterations of one or more basic substances (ingredients), both physical (produced by actions) and chemical (produced through mixing and changes in substances), gives as a result, something different from the original elements, usually of greater value or utility than the ingredients themselves<sup>ii</sup>”.

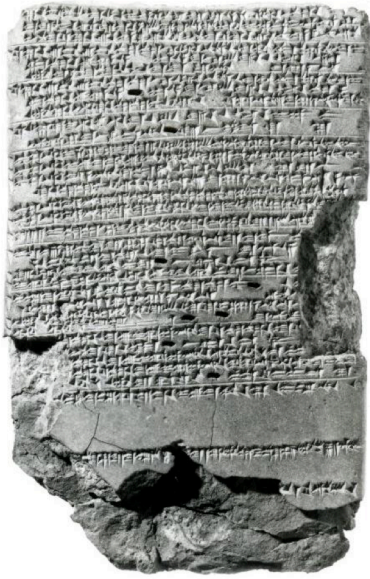
The notion of recipe is not something extraneous to us. We deal with them in our everyday lives, consciously or not. Consider the instructions given by your grandmother on how to cure your sore throat, or the prescription you received from your doctor, which allows you to buy antibiotics for your inflamed throat at the pharmacy. “An apple a day keeps the doctor away!” a variant of the proverb, "Eat an apple on going to bed, and you'll keep the doctor from earning his bread", which was itself a popular 19th century expression in Wales. It is an example of how a proverb can also act as a recipe, in this case, a recipe for staying healthy<sup>iii</sup>.

The ancient meaning of recipe comes from the Latin *recepta*, a neutral participle plural past of *recipere* which literally means “things taken”, since in medieval Latin the description of the processes usually began with the instruction to “take” the various ingredients<sup>iv</sup>. Thus, the imperative “recipe” is an instruction “to take” the following elements. In English, “recipe” is nothing but the first word of each recipe, which functions as a command. Take the following ingredients (in order to) achieve something.  $A+B=C$ , that's the equation for a recipe. But what's in-between?

### **What makes the recipe a recipe?**

Both the structure and the language of the recipe have undergone only modest transformations over the centuries. The only significant difference between ancient and modern recipes is that in the latter the doses are specified, times indicated, and the procedures described in more detail. This is explained by the fact that the ancient recipes were intended to circulate and be transmitted within a specific group of people (cook to cook, painter to his apprentice, mother to daughter). In the middle ages, for example, technical books (also called “book of secrets”) had a very particular diffusion, and represented a precise literary genre. Every artisan workshop possessed a book in which technical passages and the annotations of experiments (the so-called "secrets of the craft") were handed down from generation to generation and gradually recorded. These books were therefore a mixed bag of useful information, written by experts in a certain field for other experts. Before the introduction of paper and books, bone, shells,

wood, and clay were the most popular mediums for writing, and were used to record whoever and whatever was considered significant. Clay tablets are a perfect example of a enduring imprinted object, many of which have survived into modern times due to the durability of the medium.



## The Material Form: The clay tablet

Fig. 1 – Tablet 26 on Epilepsy from the Babylonian ‘Diagnostic Series’. Obverse of BM47753 in the British Museum, London. Period: Neo-Babylonian (ca. 626-539 BC).

BM 47753 is an important Neo-Babylonian manuscript of Tablet 26 of the Diagnostic Handbook, composed of 40 tablets arranged into six chapters. Tablet 26 is the first tablet of the chapter on epilepsy. The tablet is characterized by one of the earliest systems of writing called cuneiform. The word itself comes from the Latin term *cuneus*

meaning “wedge”, which is in reference to the “wedge-shaped” form made whenever the scribe would imprint the stylus into the damp clay<sup>v</sup>.

### **So here is the first clue – But who did this?**

The scribe was a professional copyist and a master ceramicist, whose job was to transcribe messages, myths, letters, poems, and eventually recipes. This particular tablet falls within the scientific category, or more precisely the medical one. N.B. The concept of science, which has been shaped in the context of modern industrial societies, does not reflect the realities of Antiquity. Here the word science includes areas of knowledge such as mathematics, astral science, medicine, divination, lexical text, school text, and practical texts of theoretical nature<sup>vi</sup>.

The tablet gives symptoms of epilepsy, assigns diseases with names, gives an analysis of causes, and describes the various ways that the symptoms present themselves. Text is arranged by subject according to body parts, and runs in a sequence from the head to the feet. As is typical in Mesopotamian scribal practice, each entry consists of two parts, a *protasis*<sup>2</sup> and an *apodosis*<sup>3</sup>. The protasis states the nature of the case; with medical texts, this is usually the symptoms observed. The Apodosis states the treatment, much like a medical recipe. Modern translations uncovered words such as *miqtu* (“fall”), *hayyatu* (“fit”), and *sibtu* (“seizure”), as well as the names of several supernatural entities. On the one hand, the Mesopotamians made advances into the medical lexicon and disease terminology, but on the other

<sup>2</sup> The clause expressing the condition in a conditional sentence (e.g. The “if you asked me” in, for example, the sentence “if you asked me, I would agree”). Origin: late 16th century via Latin from Greek *protasis* (“proposition”), from *pro* (“before”) + *teinein* (“to stretch”). From <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/protasis>

<sup>3</sup> The main clause of a conditional sentence (e.g. The “I would agree” in, for example, the sentence “if you asked me, I would agree”). Origin: Early 17th century via late Latin from Greek, from *apodidonai* (“give back”). From <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apodosis>



hand, most of the causes were believed to originate in demons. That's when the magician comes in.

So here there are 4 figures: the scribe, who solemnly inscribes the physician's report of his objective experiences, and the magician, who obtain cures for the patient. Picture George Clooney, playing the part of Dr. Doug Ross in the 90s TV-series ER, entering your house arm-in-arm with Father Lankester Merrin, the priest depicted in multiples movie adaptation of the novel 'The Exorcist'. The tablet was such a porous object that it was able to bring together an extravagant and unusual care team.

### **How were the tablets handled back then?**

The tablet measures 15cm by 10cm and is 3cm thick. Two dimensionally it fits on an A6 paper – a birthday card, the postcard you receive from your parents whenever they leave the country on a trip, or the monthly envelope containing the phone bill. Three-dimensionally, it would resemble an English-Dutch pocket dictionary, or the book "Poems of Love" by Eugenio Montale. Maybe even a blue Tiffany's box concealing a fancy necklace. The clay makes the tablet light and comfortable to hold in your hand, yet it would become firm and durable object if fired. But in fact, the clay tablets weren't meant to be fired and preserved. By adding water to the clay, the tablet would once again become doughy and ready to hold a newer text. In the case of those tablets found fired and thus well-preserved, it is supposed that they were baked accidentally, perhaps by fire.

### **How did they circulate within this circle?**

The physician reports the treatment to the scribe, who transcribes it on the clay tablet. The tablet was later handled by the physician and the magician.

### **Where was it kept?**

In fancy and well-organized library of the physician? Or close to the herbal and fluid antidotes in the magician's home? Were they kept horizontally, or were they vertically standing between other tablets with no specific label on the spine?

The materiality holds upon these passages, carved by instructed fingers and organically shaped tools. It is a body itself, whether or not it's filled with the imprints of strokes and edges. Since it's a three-dimensional, a light-weight body, the recipe finds its principal carrier in people's hands so that the circulation between the figures is activated by the tactility of the object; therefore the functionality of the clay becomes

the distinctive feature of the recipe. A recipe that deserves to pursue its goals in time and in the cycle (to understand entirely the circumstances of the patient in this case). Subsequently, it surrenders its materiality, the malleability that makes the tablet vulnerable to possible replacement by wet hands, which brings water to the surface. That is when it is made doughy and slimy and ready to host a new imprint.

**Does the materiality of a recipe tie down its meaning and mobility?**

The three-dimensional body of text can coexist alongside the objects that surround us, but what happens when we confide on a body of text written on a two-dimensional surface?

**Where will its mobility lead us?**

## The Literary Form - Leonardo Da Vinci's note

Fig. 2 – Paper, Pen and ink. Leonardo Da Vinci. 280mm-214 x 216-124 – Codex Atlanticus. Recto – Circa 1480.



Page 195 is part of the Codex Atlanticus, a twelve-volume, bound set of drawings and studies by Leonardo Da Vinci. The codex was compiled after the death of Leonardo in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century by the sculptor Pompeo Leoni, who personally attached the manuscripts page-by-page onto the large paper that was, at that time, typically used for atlases<sup>vii</sup>. Codex Atlanticus deals with various subjects, ranging from architecture to botany, mechanics to hydraulics, studies and sketches for paintings to mathematics and astronomy, from philosophical meditations to fables, all the way to curious inventions such as parachutes, war machinery, and hydraulic pumps.

The specular writing system is what distinguishes Leonardo's *taccuini*<sup>4</sup>. The special character of this system is that it is formed by writing in the direction that is the reverse of the natural way for a given language, such that the result is the mirror image of normal writing: it appears normal when it is reflected in a mirror<sup>viii</sup>.

Leonardo was capable of writing from right to left. He was left-handed, and so writing from left to right would have been messy because the ink just put down would smear as his hand moved across it. This is one of possible reasons for the reverse inscription. Besides that, it's certainly possible that he just wanted to make things a bit more complicated for everyone. Perhaps the specular text was intended to disclose Leonardo's secrets. An open window to Leonardo's thoughts, but only for those able to crack the code.

Working at full capacity with both left and right sides of his brain, Leonardo's unquenchable curiosity and inventive imagination produced many contributions to society that were far ahead of their time. Leonardo was an observer: a person inclined to question everything around him, and make note of it in his *taccuini*.

Page 195 is comprised by a left column where literature pieces are transcribed and by a right column where is noted a technical recipe: a recipe on how to rehydrate dried oil colour. The two bodies of text reveal the alternation of unequal shapes in a

<sup>4</sup> Notebook, personal diaries.

harmonic context. It's a sign of the continuous creative production in accordance with intelligence, looking towards faithfulness to one's intuitions. The instincts and the emotional contents are melded so as to conduct this personality in a dynamic way. One by the other and each of them follow its own diagonal orientation, as it's suggested to encounter them as two separated entities which coexist on the paper. At this very moment the page is not mirrored (fig. 2).

The recipe states:

“To rehydrate dry oil colours. If you want to rehydrate the dried oil colours, keep it soaking in the lye one night and with the finger mix the substance and pour into a glass and washed with water and in this way you will get the hydration of the colours that dry up.

But let each colour to have its own glass, giving its own colour from time to time, and let it soak, and when you want to use it in tempera, wash it 5 or 6 times with reservoir water and let it rest. If the lye gets numb with some colour, make it pass through the felt. The lye raises the mass to peel and the too abundant niches, and it is better when it is left to soaked for three or four days in the warmth.

And when you remove the leftover scraps, take them with a couple of clothespins and put them in fresh water and wash them with a sponge, if you don't want your nails to turn black. Having removed enough quantity from the lye, let it dry, like the tartar that forms in the wine barrel, and then turn it into oil. Beautifully yellow. Dissolve the arsenic sulphur. The mouth killed more than the knife<sup>ix</sup>.”

To do (something), if you want to (get a to a specific outcome), to keep (to hold on to), in this way (it leads to), when you want to (pursued something), make it (this way) – to remove, to take, to dry, to soak. These verbs recall a familiarity with the Latin term *recepta*. While on one hand the conditional tenses are used to speculate about what will happen next, on the other hand the commands speaks to you, and you only. There is no other figure hidden in the text, neither a place where this process has taken place or where it should take place.

**A lot of substances, no precise quantity and detailed movements that help you to follow the instruction.**

**Who was he addressing while noting down these instructions?**

It might have been a fellow painter or his assistant Francesco Melzi – someone who felt the urgency of asking how the hell you re-use the dried out oil colours. The first space where this instruction acquires body is in Leonardo's head, where the question could have raised itself: “What can I do to... (Solve it)?” According with

Leonardo's thought, truth is drawn from the direct experience of nature, from the observation of phenomena. "My things were born under the simple and mere experience, which is the true teacher"<sup>5</sup>. Phenomena are what it takes to acknowledge the proprieties of a certain manifestation.  $A+B=C$ , remember? By combining his knowledge of chemistry, oenology, painting, and most importantly, his intimacy with the ingredients, he did nothing more than heed the demands to experiment with matter and to find solutions under different circumstances.

Leonardo's internal references imprinted on his taccuini, which are still objects of study nowadays, are an example of how the evocative elements of recipes directly and indirectly addresses the recipient, here meant as a person open to receiving the knowledge and also able to contaminate it.

**But what happen when the recipe intentionally speaks to external entities? When it addresses no one in particular, and in doing so it attracts the masses?**

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<sup>5</sup> From *Codex Atlanticus*.

## The Social Form: The Manifesto of Futuristic Cooking



Fig. 3 – ‘Manifesto della cucina futurista’ in the Gazzetta del Popolo, 1930, Civic Library, Turin.

The Manifesto of Futurist Cooking was first published in 1930 by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Luigi Colombo, who was also known as Fillia. The manifesto is comprised of recipes and dining suggestions which are somewhat unconventional, to say the least. On the 28th of December 1930, The Turin newspaper ‘Gazzetta Del Popolo<sup>6</sup>’ published ‘THE MANIFESTO OF FUTURIST COOKING’. It reports:

“We believe the following necessary first of all:

- a) The abolition of pasta, that absurd Italian gastronomic religion...
- b) The abolition of volumes and weight in the way nutrition is conceived and evaluated...
- c) The abolition of the traditional mixture in order to experiment with all the seemingly preposterous new mixtures ...
- d) The abolition of the mediocre quotidian in the pleasures of the palate..."

The first paragraph of the article contains the term abolition four times. Abolition meant in the sense of ‘to eliminate’, ‘remove from use’, or ‘renounce’ (or induce others to renounce) something. It does not bring new flavours to the table, nor try to open up a discussion.

### **But who was this fearless man called Tommaso Marinetti?**

He was born in Alexandria, Egypt on December 22nd, 1876, into a wealthy family. His father was a lawyer from Piedmont and his mother was a housewife who loved reading poetry to her sons. A passion for literature manifested itself during his adolescence. At the age of seventeen, he created his started literary magazine called the Papyrus, which mostly dealt with literary criticism. He was attacking and praising with the same energy, with a methodology, which eventually recurred in his

<sup>6</sup> Gazzetta del Popolo was an Italian daily newspaper founded in Turin, in northern Italy, on 16 June 1848. It ceased publication on 31 December 1983 after 135 years of operation.

manifestos. After graduating with a law degree in 1899, according with his father's wishes, he later pursued his literary career in Paris, where he would frequent the literary salons<sup>x</sup>.

By the time he lost his parents and older brother, Marinetti was already working for a French journal in Milan. He was not only left with exceptional confidence but also with an unusual

level of wealth which later allowed him to focus on drawing the foundations for what would become Futurism<sup>7</sup>.

The Futurists recognized that people “think, dream and act according to what they eat and drink”, and so believed that the cooking and eating experience should be altered to better fit the changing landscape of the 20th century and, indeed, their own world view. Marinetti and Fillia wanted to revolutionize the way everybody thought about food. And to do so, they wrote quite clearly in their Manifesto the passages later publicized in the journal to follow. For example, some requirements for a perfect futuristic meal are: “Abolition of the fork and the knife for the plastic complexes, which can give prelabial tactile pleasure ... A supply of scientific instruments in the kitchen: ozonizers,... lamps for the emission of ultraviolet rays,... electrolyzers,... colloidal grinders,... vacuum stills, centrifugal autoclaves, dialyzers.”

Now imagine that every Italian woke up, close to New Year's Eve of the year 1931 and right after the celebrations of Christmas, to read in a widespread journal that “all the defenders of pasta and the relentless enemies of Futurist cooking are people of gloomy temperament, content with melancholy and propagandists of melancholy... Only a Futuristic meal can cheer them up.” Before digesting the text, which might have been chewed on as a big joke at first, Italians not only found themselves labelled as enemies of the Futurist movement (given their food habits), but even told that they ought to be cheered up during the festivities!

For example, one of the crowning achievements of the new Futurist cuisine was the Carneplastico, a meat sculpture (fig. 4). The formula was created by the aeropainter Fillia. The Carneplastico is a synthetic interpretation of Italy's orchards, garden, and pastures – an ode to the Italian landscape! It is “made up of a large cylindrical rissole of roast veal filled with eleven different cooked vegetables. This cylinder, placed vertically in the centre of the plate, is topped with a layer of honey



<sup>7</sup> Futurism was an artistic and social movement that originated in Italy in the early 20th century. It emphasised speed, technology, youth, violence, and objects such as the car, the airplane, and the industrial city.

and supported at the base by a ring of sausage, which rest on three golden spheres of chicken meat<sup>x</sup>”.

The recipes are structured in a way that together with the primary ingredients they described a whole new, totally different dining setting. From a detailed description of the consistency of the food such as “luminous sauce,... cover with threads,... aeroplane shaped,... pink plate tinted,... form a large blob,...” to the arrangement of the meal on the plate. During the dining experience, guests are asked to perform different tasks simultaneously while the waitress is spraying them with conprofumo and there is dismusica playing in the background. The verbs, as well as new Italianised terms used in the recipes, refer to a whole new choreography of senses driven by the urgency to adapt gastronomy to the concept of Futurism. Golden, cosmic, bombe, diabolical, aerodish, devil, immortal, the great, flash, freedom, ultra virile, sparkle, sky, intuitive, spicy, landing and awakener are few of the adjectives used to name the dishes. However, they don't give much attention to the quantities as they even suggest “possible errors often suggest new dishes”.

**Little specification, no doses, no quantities, no cooking instructions, and a lot of attention on the outcome.**

Speaking to a broad audience, from the upper classes down to the poorer, how did the Futurists imagine Italians to react in their kitchens? Indeed, Futurists never really cared whether Italians were cooking balanced sculpture at home or avoiding pasta for lunch. If every Italian had embraced this new Futuristic regime in life, kitchen, and art, the movement itself would have lost its privilege as an elite group.

The anti-pasta crusade naturally drew howls of protest and received worldwide publicity, exactly the reactions desired by Marinetti. It allowed him to create an ambivalent ground where he was able to organize a real international promotional campaign to present Futurist dishes.

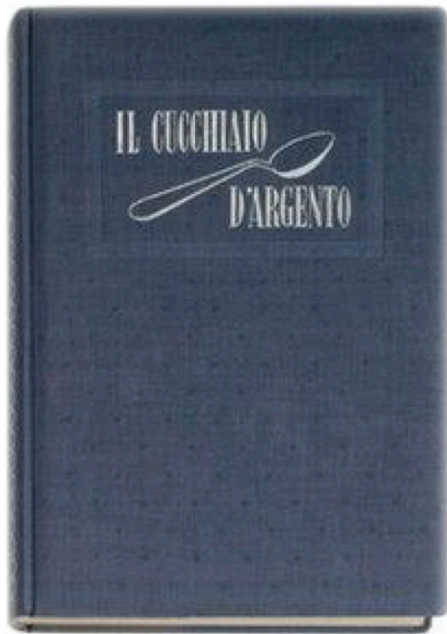
Despite the appearance of multiple places willing to embrace these new dining experiences, what was really happening under the dining tables was nothing other than propaganda.

What Marinetti did was to appropriate the universal and domestic structure of recipes and use them to fuel his idealistic program. In this way his proposition for a futuristic cooking was nationalistic and violent: “Spaghetti is not food for fighters!” he declared. It was not surprising that Marinetti became closely associated with Mussolini and therefore with fascism. In 1918, Marinetti played a leading role in the formation of the ‘Futurist Political Party’ (Fasci Politici Futuristi). This Party later merged with Mussolini's to form the Italian Fascist Party, and Marinetti went on to



co-author its first manifesto<sup>xi</sup>. The party, however, with both Mussolini and Marinetti included as one of its candidates, performed miserably in the 1919 Italian elections. Although Marinetti maintained close links with Fascism, he gradually began disengaging from its political side, preferring to concentrate on the less confrontationalist issue of achieving the cultural pre-eminence of Futurism in the field of art.

In line with his urgency to set a solid ideological agenda, the Futurist Cookbook came out in 1932. A book where the script of the manifesto, the Doctor's opinion in favour, the testimony of the gastronomy experiences, and the 80 recipes framed within a narrative account of some successful futuristic dinners, combined together to prove that Marinetti was a great critic and writer, but not the ideal person to share a culinary recipe after all.



## The interconnected bags

All of the cases reported above have multiple aspects in common. Behind these bodies of text there is a maker and his urgency to convey his specific knowledge.

- The clay tablet on epilepsy is a set of instructions concerning medical help. A medical recipe, a health-care program implemented by a physician (and a magician) in the form of instruction that controls the care plan of an individual patient.
- The page of the notebook by Leonardo Da Vinci is a set of instructions in form of transmittance. To impart to a successor, from master to apprentice. It doesn't state the recipients, but it defies it by using a detailed terminology which itself addresses those recipients who share the same field of interest.
- The journal in which the Manifesto was published is a set of political instruction, which addresses the audience and therefore speaks to the masses.

The recipe is most likely perceived as a frozen moment enhanced by the articulation of verbs of command, materials, quantity, and how these features are structured together. It is conventional to consider the recipe as a pre-moment before the act of committing yourself to the instruction and its procedure. The backstage before the climax of the final result. In the book 'The Craftsman', Richard Sennett states "Gastronomy is a narrative, with a beginning (raw ingredients), a middle (their combination and cooking), and an end (eating)." If we now apply this thought to all the recipes, culinary or not, they will be perceived as a stage where the narrative takes place rather than a passage itself; the reader will have to move through this narrative rather than focus on just one step, it is by imagining the whole process that you get outside yourself<sup>xiii</sup>. The recipe's realisation depends on the experience of the reader. A perpetual experience, because it belongs to the written and unwritten word, to the paratext, to the erased notes at the corner of the page, to the oral tradition, to the post-it left by my mother on the fridge, to the notebook filled of cut text from magazine and to the artists' practice. When the recipe is brought from an inner level to external (the social) it unfolds its characteristic as something sharable, available to everyone. And if something is made available to everyone it signifies that is open to interpretation.

The 1950 cookbook ‘Il cucchiaino d’argento’<sup>8</sup> (fig. 5) showcases at the end of each chapter a space dedicated to personal recipes in watermarked writing paper interleaved within the text. It can be seen as a generous gesture from the publisher, who understood the mechanisms initiated by the recipes and therefore invites the executor to note down his own passages and suggestions.

“Expressive directions connect technical craft to the imagination<sup>9</sup>”

Imagination can lead to contamination of a recipe. Indeed in the process of writing a recipe, the maker cannot take into consideration the background of every reader. He or she can write what they know by unpacking instructive meaning in experiences he or she have lives through. Therefore it can be addressed by the title of the book, the ingredients, the tools used, and its terminology. But to really address the journey the recipe will undertake when and if published is unknown. Whether they are the culinary recipes bequeathed unto you by your ancestor or the list of precautions in the wood workshop, they all lead to a certain purpose: to make its contents sharable.

The maker, in these terms, allows the contents (meant as everything that is contained within something) of the recipe to over flow the written language and reach the reader. Contents are whatever is found between the lines by the reader: ingredients, metaphors, proverbs, tools, activations, verbs, rituals, the workstation and the emotional value and so on.

### **What if the recipe is perceived as a container itself?**

The term receptacle comes from the Latin term *recipiens*, the present participle of the same verb that sees in the word recipe its origins: *recipere* (see page 6). ‘Receiving, accepting’ and therefore ‘containing’<sup>xiii</sup>. As a consequence the term container acquired a dual definition: as being a recipient itself, something that holds together (knowledge) and at the same time the recipients who received this knowledge and take it as its own. To perceive the contents of the recipe to write a thesis as individual containers, some might hold verbs of motion, while others might look like jars holding the spices together.

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<sup>8</sup> // *Cucchiaino d’Argento* is a cookery book published in 1950 by the magazine of design and architecture Domus. It is one of the most famous and popular cookbooks in Italy, with over 2000 recipes.

<sup>9</sup> From the chapter The Written Recipe, pg 193, last paragraph. The Craftsman, Richard Sennett.



This everyday object is caught within conflicting origin stories about the material history of human evolution. In her 1986 essay *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, Ursula K. Le Guin provides a counter-narrative to the anthropological theories that assert that the first tools created by humans were weapons – an origin story that centres the hunter, the

hero. The Carrier Bag Theory proposes instead that the first human device was not a weapon but in fact a container or basket used to gather and bring home food and other resources. Before the knife, the axe, the blade, or blunt objects of dominance and destructive force, was the carrier, the holder, the receptacle. This account offers a more inclusive narrative that centres the gatherer, the nurturer, in place of the violent aggressor<sup>xiv</sup>. In fact the familiar shape of a container has been found on stone-carving and statues decorated by spirits and gods holding bags made by the Assyrian (c.a. 883-859 B.C.) in Iraq, in the ruins of ancient Göbekli Tepe (c.a. 9130 – 8800 B.C.) in Turkey (fig. 6), and in crafts made by the Olmecs (c.a. 1200 – 400 B.C.) of Central America. Experts believe that early religions worshiped the fundamental ingredients of life on earth – that’s why gods were represented holding sacred bags, a holy container, filled with sacred things<sup>xv</sup>.

Suppose we consider the recipe as the carrier bag of Ursula and the holy container of early civilisations. Would that perspective help us to see that the many characteristics of the recipe may be considered as necessary elements of a whole? Because isn’t its purpose neither resolution nor stasis, but continuing process as well?

In this process, the recipe is read, re-interpreted, misread, re-arranged, underlined, understood, finally recapped, and maybe even erased. In this sense we could perhaps consider all forms of contamination an enrichment of the recipe. Thus the processes of contamination are part of the invitation that the recipe has in its meaning from the Latin term *recipere*, as ‘things taken’, and therefore it does embody all the information and ingredients everyone gathers in their own carrier bag.

## Endnotes:

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- <sup>i</sup> Definition of to burble <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/burble>
- <sup>ii</sup> Definition of recipe <https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ricetta>
- <sup>iii</sup> History of the proverb <https://wordhistories.net/2019/05/24/apple-keeps-doctor-away/>
- <sup>iv</sup> Origin of the word recipe <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/ricetta/>
- <sup>v</sup> Cuneiform definition <https://www.britannica.com/topic/cuneiform>
- <sup>vi</sup> Concept of science [http://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=history\\_of\\_science](http://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=history_of_science)
- <sup>vii</sup> Leonardo Da Vinci Codex Atlanticus <https://codex-atlanticus.it/#/>
- <sup>viii</sup> Specular writing <http://xoomer.virgilio.it/pwvbo/specular%20writing.htm>
- <sup>ix</sup> Recipe <https://www.leonardodavinci-italy.it/codice-atlantico>
- <sup>x</sup> The Futurist Cookbook, 1991, by F. T. Marinetti (author), Lesley Chamberlain (editor), Suzanne Brill (translator), ISBN 9783956790034
- <sup>xi</sup> Manifesti Futuristi, 2009, by G. Davico Bonino, ISBN 9788817028783
- <sup>xii</sup> The Craftsman, 2008, by Richard Sennett, ISBN 9780300119091
- <sup>xiii</sup> Definition of receptacle <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/recipiente/>
- <sup>xiv</sup> Essay "The carrier bag theory of Fiction", by Ursula K. Le Guin, 1986
- <sup>xv</sup> Handbag of the Gods. Web. <http://lost-origins.com/perspectives-on-ancient-handbag-images/>

## References:

- Fig. 1 Tablet 26 on Epilepsy. Web. [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Tablet-26-on-Epilepsy-from-the-Babylonian-collection-in-the-British-Museum-London\\_fig1\\_333658947](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Tablet-26-on-Epilepsy-from-the-Babylonian-collection-in-the-British-Museum-London_fig1_333658947)
- Fig. 2 Codex Atlanticus. From 16. Leonardo: favole e facezie. Disegni di Leonardo dal Codice Atlantico, con la collaborazione di Giuditta Cirnigliaro, Novara, De Agostini, 2013. (ISBN 978-88418-9724-9)
- Fig. 3 Scan of "Manifesto della cucina futurista" in the Gazzetta del Popolo, 1930, from Civic Library, Turin.
- Fig. 4 Picture of Carneplastico dish, from the youtube video "Carneplastico ricetta cucina futurista" by Elicrisio. Web. [https://www.elicriso.it/it/cucina/cucina\\_futurista/](https://www.elicriso.it/it/cucina/cucina_futurista/)

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Fig. 5 Front cover art of the book “Il cucchiaino d'argento”. Web.

<https://www.cucchiaino.it/gallery/articolo/tra-pochi-giorni-il-nuovo-cucchiaino-d-argento-e-in-libreria/>

Fig. 6 Pillar 43, Göbekli Tepe, Turkey. Web.

[https://rgdn.info/en/gebkli\\_tepe.\\_o\\_chem\\_govorit\\_lisa\\_perevod\\_doklada](https://rgdn.info/en/gebkli_tepe._o_chem_govorit_lisa_perevod_doklada)

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## Movies:

- Big Night. 1996, directed by Campbell Scott and Stanley Tucci
- La Grande Bouffe. 1973, directed by Marco Ferreri
- The Cook, the Thief, his Wife & her Lover. 1989, directed by Peter Greenaway
- Eat Drink Man Woman. 1994, directed by Ang Lee
- Chef's Table. Vol. 1, Ep. 1: 'Massimo Bottura'. 2015, directed by David Gelb