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## 6 APRIL 2019: #CARBONARADAY

### **NEVER WAS THERE A MORE DEBATED RECIPE... THE ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF “CARBONARA” ACCORDING TO THE BOOKS OF ACADEMIA BARILLA’S GASTRONOMIC LIBRARY**

*It is cited for the first time in an Italian film from 1951 starring Aldo Fabrizi. And three years later, it appears in the literary work “Racconti Romani” (Roman Tales) by Alberto Moravia. But the first recipe for pasta alla carbonara was published – strangely enough – in a restaurant guide for a district in Chicago.*

*Luca Cesari’s research work in Academia Barilla’s Gastronomic Library*

*provides a detailed, totally new reconstruction of the origins and evolution of the world’s most popular pasta dish.*

*Suffice to say that the ingredients of the first ever carbonara’s recipe published in Italy were bacon, gruyere and garlic: not a trace of pecorino cheese, guanciale (cured pork jowl) or pepper – as purists would say!*

*For #CarbonaraDay 2019, Barilla starts from the origins of this recipe, giving a nod to the future through a contest organised in cooperation with La Cucina Italiana, that will give food influencers, journalists and pasta lovers the chance to make their own version of carbonara, using the classic ingredients, or opting for the new ones...*

It is the most widely debated, interpreted and beloved Italian recipe in the world. The etymology of its name is still a mystery, with three possible explanations: the carboneria (a secret society), the carbonai (charcoal kiln builders) and the colour of the pepper used to prepare it. While, considering the **origin of the recipe** various theories are still being debated. So was **Pasta alla Carbonara the result of an encounter with the K-ration of Ancel Keys, during the Second World War**, or was it an evolution of the dish “cacio e ova” (cheese and eggs) enjoyed by the **charcoal kiln builders in the Apennines**? Could it be a **variation on some Neapolitan recipes** based on eggs and cheese dating to the end of the 19th century? Is it an American recipe, an Italian recipe or a fusion of both?

On **Carbonara Day 2019** – scheduled tomorrow, 6 April from 10.00 am (CET) on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram following hashtag #CarbonaraDay and #CarbonaraChallenge – **Barilla** kicks off the debate on the **genesis and evolution of this world’s famous pasta dish**: it does so through the accounts contained in the **books of the Gastronomic Library of Academia Barilla** collected by scholar Luca Cesari, who has carried out some important, new, philological research on Carbonara. The study shows impressive number of literary and cinematographic citations, recipes, menus, historical photos, which enable us to reconstruct the history of carbonara from the 1950s to the present day.

#### **WHAT IS THE MOST ACCREDITED THEORY? THE INVENTION OF CARBONARA AS AN ENCOUNTER BETWEEN TWO CULTURES**

The most recognized version in historical criticism is that **Carbonara is the result of an encounter between Italian gastronomic culture – that of Central Italy, to be precise – and American culture**. In particular, its **origin** is said to date to the ‘K-ration’ that **Ancel Keys** – an **American biologist and physiologist, also considered to be the theorist of the Mediterranean Diet** – invented in 1942 to guarantee an adequate

diet to the allied troops stationed in Rome. Specifically, this consisted of adding a powdered egg yolk and bacon.

This fact is also confirmed in a book by the journalist and writer **Eleonora Cozzella** entitled *“La carbonara perfetta – Origine ed evoluzione di un piatto culto”* (Perfect carbonara - The origin and evolution of a cult dish) which will be presented on 6 April, Carbonara Day.

*“Right from the 1950s, when the dish became fashionable in the trattorias of Rome – states Cozzella – two co-existing currents develop in the making of carbonara. A mainstream current, simply made with **bacon or guanciale, cheese and eggs**. And another, more “bourgeois” version so to speak, typical of the more upper class families, the ladies of which preferred to start off by **frying onions and adding a dash of white wine**. Cream also played an important role, to such an extent that it actually appears in the 1960s as an ingredient in the handbooks of Luigi Carnacina, by Luigi Veronelli”.*

If carbonara is an extraordinarily successful dish today, it is also because it is a tangible expression of two different gastronomic applications: bacon and egg combined with 100% Italian pasta and cheese. And its fame has continued to grow in a parallel manner in both the United States and Italy, guaranteeing its success.

#### **#CARBONARA CHALLENGE: BARILLA CELEBRATES PASTA ALLA CARBONARA WITH A CONTEST**

On **#CarbonaraDay 2019**, Barilla will invite pasta lovers to share their own version of carbonara on social media, including any personal variations, in the true spirit of the **#CarbonaraChallenge**, which will be the real novelty of this year. It will start off by prompting a discussion on **Instagram** with a [video](#) on **#CarbonaraDay** involving food influencers and chefs.

Since a challenge really ignites the passion and talent of individuals, Barilla, in cooperation with La Cucina Italiana, will present a **brand new contest on carbonara**, which will be held on **Saturday 6 April from 6pm to 10pm in Milan**, in which food influencers, journalists and readers will take part.

The guests, divided into team, may interpret either the **classic recipe** or **create variations of the dish**. A jury will be standing by to declare the winner, and who knows whether the recipe will be classic or modern!

#### **CARBONARA’S “FIRST TIME” IN A FILM STARRING ALDO FABRIZI IN 1951**

But let’s go back to the origins of carbonara. **From the Gastronomic Library of Academia Barilla**, we learn that one of the first times carbonara was ever mentioned was in a film of 1951 entitled *“Cameriera bella presenza offresi”* (Housemaid). Perhaps it is no coincidence that Maria (Elsa Merlini), the housemaid, declares that she does not know how to cook carbonara on request, but ends up making such a good “pasta all’amatriciana” that the house owner (Aldo Fabrizi) decides to hire her on the spot. Unlike carbonara, pasta all’amatriciana had been famous for around 25 years...

#### **...BUT THE FIRST PUBLICATION OF THE RECIPE WAS IN AN AMERICAN GUIDE**

For some it might seem a contradiction in terms, but **the first ever recipe for carbonara appeared in 1952 in an illustrated restaurant guide for a district of Chicago**. How it got there no-one knows, but the fact remains that its history is between two continents, and this has had a tremendous influence on its great success. Two more years passed before the recipe was finally published in Italy. In 1954, in the **August issue of the magazine La Cucina italiana** we discover *Spaghetti alla carbonara*. The ingredients of the first Italian recipe were **bacon, gruyere and garlic**, whatever our Italian food purists might think...

In the same year, **the first all-Italian literary mention** appeared, thanks to **Alberto Moravia** who introduced carbonara in the short story “Il pensatore” (the thinker) from his collection *Racconti Romani*.

## **THE LEAST ACCREDITED THEORIES: INVENTED BY THE CHARCOAL KILN BUILDERS IN THE APPENINES, OR OF NEAPOLITAN ORIGIN**

Some theories border on fantasy. One of these is that **the dish was supposedly ‘invented’ by the charcoal kiln builders in the Apennines** (*carbonari* in Roman dialect), using ingredients that were easy to procure and store. In this case, carbonara would have been the evolution of the dish known as ‘cacio e ova’, which originated in Lazio and Abruzzo. The final theory traces the **origin of the recipe to Neapolitan cuisine**. This theory identifies a possible origin of the dish in some of the recipes mentioned in the treaty of 1837 *Cucina teorico-pratica* by Ippolito Cavalcanti.

## **THE EVOLUTION OF CARBONARA FROM THE 1950s TO THE PRESENT DAY**

From the study it emerges how at the **end of the 1950s carbonara was firmly anchored to the original ingredients of the first recipe books** i.e. **bacon, parmesan and whole eggs as the main ingredients**.

**Guanciale**, instead, appears for the first time in quotations from an American tourist guide dating to 1957 “*Eating in Italy: a pocket guide to Italian food and restaurants*”.

**Parmesan**, the only ingredient included from the outset until the mid 1960s, after which it began to be replaced by **pecorino**, or became a mixture of the two.

**In the mid-1960s** instead of whole eggs, only **eggs yolks** started to be used. From the 1970s, other spurious ingredients, such as **wine, garlic, onion and parsley** began to disappear. Cream has had the longest life of all non original ingredients, managing to resist until the mid-1990s.

Only **in the 1990s did guanciale begin to take appear in the majority of the recipes**. And so at the beginning of the new millennium, **carbonara was totally different from the original recipe of the 1950s**, with **guanciale and pecorino** replacing the original **bacon and parmesan** combination.

## **AT LEAST ONE THING IS CERTAIN: ITALIAN MILLENNIALS LOVE IT TODAY**

Still today there is no other recipe that arouses Italians’ culinary passion like pasta alla carbonara. According to a recent Doxa-Aidepi survey, **Carbonara** (along with oven-baked pasta and spaghetti with tomato sauce) **is one of the 3 favourite recipes of 15-35 year olds**, and the absolute first choice of 18% of the Italian population. Additionally, according to **Google Food Trends 2018**, **it is the third recipe searched for in Italy after pastiera napoletana and tiramisù**.

## **THE FUTURE OF CARBONARA BETWEEN TRADITION AND INNOVATION**

Today the debate on carbonara is taking new directions and the future of **this increasingly more global recipe** deserves some consideration. For purists there is only one way of making it, the 5 star ingredients being: **guanciale, pecorino, egg, salt and pepper**. Those with a more innovative view, on the other hand, believe that, since pasta is a versatile dish, there should be no limits to the culinary interpretation of this recipe. And in fact the Carbonara of the future gives the nod to new experiments and modes of consumption with new, unusual ingredients: from vegetarian Carbonara to fish Carbonara, and even the adoption of wholewheat pasta and new pasta shapes!

### **The Barilla Group**

Barilla is a family business, not listed on the Stock Exchange, run by brothers Guido, Luca and Paolo Barilla. It was founded by their great-grandfather, Pietro Barilla, who opened a bakery and pasta shop in Parma in 1877, and now it is famous in Italy and worldwide for the excellence of its food products. With its brand – Barilla, Mulino Bianco, Pan di Stelle, Gran Cereale, Harrys,

Pavesi, Wasa, Filiz, Yemina and Vesta, Misko, Voiello and Cucina Barilla – it advocates a tasty, joyful and wholesome diet, inspired by the Mediterranean Diet and the Italian way of life.

When he opened his store over 140 years ago, his overriding aim was to make good food. Today, that principle has become Barilla's corporate mission: "Good for You, Good for the Planet" , a slogan that expresses the daily commitment of the over 8,000 people who work for the Group, and of a supply chain that shares its values and passion for quality.

"Good for You" means constantly improving the products, encouraging the adoption of healthy lifestyles and facilitating people's access to food.

"Good for the Planet" means promoting sustainable supply chains and reducing CO2 emissions and water consumption during production.

To learn more: [www.barillagroup.com](http://www.barillagroup.com); Twitter: [@barillagroup](https://twitter.com/barillagroup); Instagram: [@barilla](https://www.instagram.com/barilla)

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