

The Fagiolina del Trasimeno

The *Fagiolina del Trasimeno* is a tiny cowpea with ancient roots. Originally from Africa, it was introduced in the Lake Trasimeno area by the Etruscans.

It belongs to the *Vigna Unguicolata* family - better known by the common name Black-Eyed Pea, which was the only species grown in Europe before the discovery of the New Continent and the introduction of the American beans which quickly replaced the local variety thanks to their higher yield and ease of cultivation.



For centuries it was one of the main sources of protein for the local population, however after WW2 its cultivation progressively dropped due to the depopulation of the rural areas, and to its being very labour intensive, time consuming, and altogether not very profitable.

Until the end of the past century the *Fagiolina* survived only thanks to the crops grown by the local families for personal use, saving it from extinction. In recent years it has however been rediscovered by some small farmers, who have started reintroducing it on the market also thanks to the concerted efforts of the Department of Agriculture of the University of Perugia, of the Council Trasimeno-Medio Tevere, and of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, that created a Presidium in 2000 (the first in Umbria) to promote the bean, helping it move beyond the local market, and encouraging production.

The *Fagiolina del Trasimeno* is grown exclusively in the territory of the Municipalities surrounding the Lake by the same name, and all the operations - from sowing to harvesting, threshing and winnowing - are still performed manually. The progressive ripening of the pods throughout the summer makes it necessary to harvest the crop repeatedly, from July to October.

The Fagiolina and its Cultivation

The typical Fagiolina del Trasimeno has tiny seeds of various colors: from off-white to rust, brown and black. It can also be speckled, or have a black eye, and there is also an all-cream variety, which is not however part of the Slow Food Presidium.

Their skin is thin and the beans are tender in the mouth, buttery and very tasty. The Fagiolina is cooked in the same way as common beans, simply boiled, or in soups or spreads. Thanks to the small size of the seeds, it does not require soaking before cooking. The taste is a bit different from that of the other beans, as it is quite herbaceous.

Compared to the common beans, the protein content of the *Fagiolina* is 5 to 15% higher, while the fiber content is 30 to 50% higher. The soluble component of the fiber in particular is up to 200% higher, and being also rich in zinc, selenium, and B3 vitamin the Fagiolina is a real prodigy as far as its nutritional values go.

The Fagiolina del Trasimeno grown by Podere Marella is certified organic by the BioAgriCert control body.

Cooking the Fagiolina del Trasimeno

Cooking the Fagiolina del Trasimeno is quick and easy – it does not require soaking, and it only takes 40/45 minutes in a normal casserole, or approximately 20 minutes in a pressure cooker.

It is a versatile ingredient that can be used in traditional dishes, but also for more imaginative recipes.

Fagiolina Soup

INGREDIENTS for 4 people:

250gr of Fagiolina del Trasimeno, 2 cloves of finely chopped garlic, 1 leek (the white part only), 1 carrot, 1 celery stick, 1 sprig of fresh thyme, 2 laurel leaves, 2 cloves, 3-4 tbs of extra virgin olive oil, salt, pepper and crushed chilies to taste.

Croutons to serve.

METHOD:

Rinse the beans (they do not need to be soaked before cooking, but if you have the time to do it, cooking time will shorten a bit). Chop the celery, carrot, and leek.

Sweat the vegetables including the garlic in a saucepan with 3-4 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil for about 10 minutes, adding a little water, if necessary.

Add all the other ingredients, cover with water or vegetable stock and cook over low heat until the Beans are tender. If the soup is too thick add more water. Serve hot with a little olive oil and croutons.



Fagiolina with Italian Sausage on Toasted Tuscan Bread



INGREDIENTS for 4 people:

120gr of Fagiolina del Trasimeno, 4 large slices of Tuscan bread from a loaf, 1 fresh Italian pork sausage, extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper to taste, 1 sprig of rosemary, 2 sage leaves, 2 cloves of garlic (optional).

METHOD:

Cook the Fagiolina in salted boiling water for 40/45 minutes. Drain and dress with a little oil.

Cut the sausage lengthwise, discard the skin and brown the pork meat in a pan with a sprig of rosemary and two sage leaves. Once cooked, add the beans, mix and turn off the heat.

Add salt if necessary, and remove sage and rosemary.

Grill the bread and, if desired, rub the slices with a

clove of garlic cut in two.

Spoon the bean and sausage mix on the bread. Drizzle with a little oil and sprinkle with freshly ground black pepper. Serve immediately, while still warm.