

## A food and wine journey through the Easter traditions of Friuli Venezia Giulia

**Ham cooked inside bread, pinza (typical cake), cjarsons (a kind of ravioli)**

**and other unique dishes: Easter allows us to travel with taste**

**from Carnia to Trieste, passing through the Collio**

Trieste, March 23, 2021 - In a region like Friuli Venezia Giulia, rich in food and wine traditions that are handed down from generation to generation and contaminated by the many peoples who have passed through this land, Easter is a much felt and celebrated moment, especially around the table with unique dishes that are deeply rooted in history and folklore.

### **Easter Brunch - from ham cooked inside bread to jelly with bay leaves**

On Easter day after Mass, it was customary to have the foods for the Easter brunch blessed, as this was the first real banquet after forty days of Lent.

The Easter brunch custom always included the **magri cuet or ham cooked in bread**: a recipe of Austro-Hungarian origin that has been faithfully kept up in Venezia Giulia. **The ham known as “Praga” actually originated in Trieste!** It is a pork ham, usually cooked on the bone, slightly smoked, sold hot and hand-sliced to which fennel flowers or grated horseradish root were added.

During the rest of the year, in the typical **Trieste buffets** (<https://www.turismoFVG.it/trieste>), you can taste the Cotto di Trieste (ham) and other products such as Porcina (boiled cured pork) at all hours accompanied by mustard or Kren (horseradish).

During this before its time brunch or the Easter lunch that follows, there is often a **dish of pork jelly decorated with a bay leaf**. This dish is not found in other regions of Italy and is characteristic of the Karst, Collio, Gorizia, some parts of Friuli and Trieste. The old Karst recipes mainly include the use of pig's feet and ears, calf's knees and shanks, while in recent times, other pork cuts have been added. When cooked, the meats are garnished with a bay leaf, peppercorns and slices of hard-boiled eggs.

Easter in Friuli Venezia Giulia is not only about gastronomic traditions. It has always been a moment for games: in **Cividale del Friuli** (<https://www.turismoFVG.it/localita/cividale-del-friuli>), the “Truc” is an ancient Easter ritual practised, according to a manuscript preserved in the Museum of Cividale, at least from the 18th century but probably much older. It consists of preparing a basin of sloping sand with a characteristic oval shape, in which coloured eggs are dropped, following precise rules, with the intent of making them touch each other.

### **Easter Lunch - the cjarsons**

Now associated primarily with **Carnia**, once the **cjarsons** were prepared throughout Friuli Venezia Giulia and were considered the Easter celebration dish starting from 1377 when the chamberlain of Gemona wrote in his records “Spendey per fa lavar li santi a Pasca di chalcons “.

They were characteristic of Easter, and this holiday was called *Pasca di cjalçons (Easter of cjarlrsns)*. Despite being a very popular dish, **it has never been possible to decide on one single recipe for cjarsons**: it is said that every household guards the secret to prepare what, they say, are the best cjarsons in Friuli Venezia Giulia. In the seventies, the Carnia chef **Gianni Cosetti** made history when he wanted to include these ravioli in his menu. He decided to hold a competition to involve the housewives of the area to find the recipe: 40 people showed up with as many different versions.

**Carnia** is a real food and wine **treasure trove**. Seven valleys furrow the Carnic Alps, on the border with Austria and Veneto, which preserve a folkloristic universe and fascinating nature, together with a heritage of spontaneous herbs, fruits, forest products and delicacies such as the cheeses produced in the malga (shepherd huts). A world to explore following the route of Da noi in montagna (with us in the mountains) of the Strada del Vino e dei Saperi (the route of wine and tastes) of Friuli Venezia Giulia (<https://www.turismoFVG.it/da-noi-in-montagna>).

### The Easter brunch – il pistun

The protagonist of the Easter brunch is **pistun, a dish that mixes sweet and savoury flavours**. Pistun, or in Gorizia fulis or velikonočne fulje, is an Easter or wedding cake. It was served at the groom's home before the ceremony: it consists of elongated cakes made with stale bread cooked in the same water used to cook the ham. It also contains raisins, pine nuts, sugar, eggs, fresh herbs, chives, wild garlic, cinnamon and nutmeg.

### Easter cakes - pinza and titole

The **pinza** is a must during the Easter holidays. It is **a sweet and soft bread that is undoubtedly the most popular of the Easter cakes in Friuli Venezia Giulia**, so much so that “**Bona Pasqua, bone pinze**” (have a nice Easter and a nice Pinza) is the wish that is exchanged in Trieste and Gorizia during the days of the Easter celebrations.

The hand kneading of the pinze required considerable physical effort and the old recipe books recommended working the final dough for up to two hours. The dough was then divided into round loaves placed in a row on wooden boards covered with a tablecloth. Cooking the pinze was complicated in the wood-burning stoves of the past, and many asked **the pec, the trusted baker**, to cook it. On Good Friday, you could see women carrying wooden boards with the pinze covered by a napkin and an egg on one side to be cooked by a professional. The most distrustful put a coin or made special signs on theirs to be sure that they were not confused with those of other families: the family recipe's particularity would have been lost! The pec took some paper numbers: one was placed on the pinze, and the other was given to the person who had brought them, so they would be recognized when they were picked up. All the pec had to do was use the egg to brush the pinze and then cut the typical Y-shape from the bottom upwards.

The same dough of the pinze is used to make the **frati or titole or tičica or menihi**, consisting of **braids of leavened dough that enclose a hard-boiled egg, often coloured red**. The shape is meant to recall that of the nails used in the crucifixion, and the red-dyed eggs recall the stones of Calvary, stained by the bright red blood that flows from the Cross.

### **Ramandolo and Picolit sweet wines**

The two most famous and appreciated sweet wines in Friuli Venezia Giulia are the **Controlled and Guaranteed Denomination of Origin** Ramandolo and Picolit wines. In recent decades they have made significant progress, becoming **products of extraordinary finesse**, capable of receiving full marks in any comparison.

Between the two, **Ramandolo** can only be **produced in a sub-area** between the municipalities of **Nimis and Tarcento** in the province of Udine, near the town Ramandolo from which it takes its name. **Picolit**, on the other hand, is obtained from grapes harvested throughout **the hilly area**, boasting the undisputed quality protected by the Controlled and Guaranteed Denomination of Origin.

**Both wines offer a perfect matching with typical Easter cakes.**

There are many wine cellars on the route **Da noi sui Colli** (with us in the hills)(<https://www.turismofvg.it/da-noi-sui-colli>) of the Strada del Vino e dei Saperi (The Wine and Dine Route) that produce Ramandolo and Picolit. Visiting them means treating yourself to a slow experience in the rolling hills of the Colli Orientali.

*(Some information in the press release is taken from the book “Ce vitis in cusine” by Roberto Zottar)*