

Title:

Lardo di Colonnata : A Tuscan Delicacy

Word Count:

378

Summary:

Lardo di Colonnata is a traditional delicacy of preserved pork fat from the mountains of Tuscany, Italy. Find out how it's made and how to use it.

Keywords:

lardo,colonnata,pork fat,preserved,tuscany,italy

Article Body:

Pork is a staple food of the mountain regions of northern Italy, where it's often said that a well butchered pig should leave 'nothing but the oink' behind. As a pig is typically around 30% fat, thrifty locals had to come up with a way to use and preserve this valuable source of protein, and the result is Lardo.

Lardo di Colonnata, to give it its full name, is a delicacy produced from pork fat in and around the Tuscan mountain town of Colonnata. Happily for fans of cured meat, it's not only a frugal way of preserving pork fat over winter - it's delicious too!

It's made in large vats known as conche, fashioned from marble quarried at the nearby 'white mountain' of Carrara, which are first liberally rubbed with garlic. Next, layers of pork fat, salt, and a special mix of herbs and spices are added until the vats are full. The conche are then sealed with a wooden lid and left in cool mountain caves for 6 months or longer to mature in the clean air.

After the maturation time is over, the conche are opened to reveal a silky-smooth, meltingly tender 'meat' which can be eaten in much the same way as Parma Ham or other prosciutto.

While Lardo is often used to keep roasted meats moist by placing a thin layer over the skin, it is also delicious simply sliced thinly and eaten with bread, olives, and a good extra virgin olive oil as part of an antipasto course. It is not at all tough or greasy, and is well worth trying even if the idea of eating pure fat leaves you a little apprehensive!

Despite the long years of making Lardo in the traditional way, most of the

examples that you may find in your local deli or store will have been made in a much more industrial setting, mainly as a result of modern hygiene laws taking precedence over customs and heritage. Gone are the marble conche and the mountain air, replaced by stainless steel and air conditioning.

However, visitors to the area around Colonnata may still be lucky and get hold of Lardo made in the old way that has been proven over the centuries - just don't tell the authorities if you do!