

HISTORY OF GELATO

The History of Gelato dates back to the 16th century. There is some confusion in the origin as to where or who really invented gelato. As most stories go, it is credited to Bernardo Buontalenti, a native of Florence, who delighted the court of Catherina dei Medici with his creation. Italians are certainly credited with introducing gelato to the rest of Europe; with Sicilian born Francesco Procopio dei Coltelli who undoubtedly was one of the most influential individuals in the history of gelato, as one of the first to sell it to the public. Summoned to Paris in 1686, he opened a café named after himself called "Café Procope", which quickly became one of the most celebrated haunts of the literary establishment in France. In Italy meanwhile, the art of traditional gelato making was passed on from father to son, improved and perfected right up to the 20th century, when many gelato makers began to emigrate, taking their know-how to the rest of Europe.

Gelato in Italian literally means "frozen", but it basically used to indicate the Italian type of ice cream. One of the basic differences between Gelato and the ice cream we know of in the United States is that it doesn't contain as much air, and is therefore more intense in flavor. In part, Gelato is healthier than American-style ice cream since it is made with all natural ingredients and contains fewer calories and less butter fat. Our Gelato is made fresh on the premises so that we can bring you the highest quality product around.

History suggests that human beings have for centuries been inventive enough to create the coolest and most refreshing drinks for the hottest seasons simply by using fruits, flavors, and if possible, ice or snow.

If we go back to the beginning there is considerable confusion about times, places and people. We do not know who invented the ice-cream we now know and love, but it is a "scenario" with a number of "actors", all of whom Italian. But we can narrow the choice down to three contenders: Ruggeri and Buontalenti, both from Florence, and a Sicilian, Procopio dei Coltelli. We do know however that sweets and fruit juices have been refrigerated ever since ancient times by many peoples and all social classes, especially in Asia Minor. We may quote the Bible and the story of Isaac that offers Abraham goat's milk mixed with snow, telling him to "EAT and DRINK: the sun is torrid and you can cool down." We may deduce that it was a sorbet-type iced milk, otherwise they would have said only "DRINK".

Thus was it Abraham that first tasted ice-cream? Maybe. And although with reservations, some scholars of the holy scriptures state that when harvesting the grain in Palestine landowners distributed blocks of snow to their servants. As in later times, this snow was collected and compressed in the winter in ad hoc constructions so that it would last until the summer. It appears that even King Solomon consumed quite a lot. When there was no snow man still managed to "make" ice, discovering a way to obtain it: by rooms, where water vapour would freeze on the rocks. In Egypt the Pharaohs would offer their guests silver chalices divided into two halves, one containing snow and the other fruit juices. In ancient Rome we discover the first recipe for a kind of ice-cream, written by general Quinto Fabio Massimo, which soon became popular.

In Rome snow was brought from Terminillo, and also via ship from Etna and Vesuvius , two immense reserves that for centuries provided a flourishing trade, with the supply of the

raw material to the popular "Thermopolia" dotted here and there along the streets and ever busy with thirsty wayfarers, and to imperial palaces. Nero is believed to have had an indigestion of snow, just like Elogabalo, at whose Court enormous amounts of frozen drinks were consumed. With the fall of the Roman Empire and the arrival of the Middle Ages many (if not all) of the delicacies that had been common to many different peoples were lost. Ice-creams disappeared too, but not in the East, where the invention of iced drinks continued to be developed. It seems that one of Muhammad's disciples discovered a way to freeze fruit juices, putting them in containers that were then placed in other recipients full of crushed ice. This system, carefully perfected, remained in place for centuries, indeed until refrigerators were invented, as a base for the preparation of ice-creams.

Charles Panati, author of the book "Extra Ordinary Origins of Everyday Things," attributes to the Chinese a 4000 year-old recipe based on well-cooked rice mixed with milk and other ingredients and then buried in snow. Similar methods were used with fruit juice to create cold desserts. Such techniques also were found throughout the Far East, Middle East, and Europe. There is evidence that the Emperors of China indulged in frozen delights made from snow and ice flavoured with fruit, wine and honey, over 3000 years ago. The earliest records of milk based gelato, are from the Tang period in China A.D. 618-907. Buffalo, cow and goat milk was heated along with grounded rice and allowed to ferment. Flour was then added for thickening and honey for sweetness. King Tang of Shang had 94 icemen on his staff that took care of this duty to create frozen desserts made of fermented buffalo and goat milk mixed with rice - the first frozen dairy dessert maybe?

It is said that the Chinese taught Arab traders how to combine syrups and snow, which translates into an early version of the sorbetto. Arab traders then showed Venetians and Romans how to make this new found frozen delicacy.

In the 4th Century B.C., Alexander the Great is said to have been fond of iced beverages.

During the Roman Empire, in 62 A.D., Emperor Nero would send his team of slaves into the mountains to find snow which would be mixed with honey to form a sweet refreshing treat. He would also add spices, leaves and fruit, creating an early version of gelato.

Additional sources mention that at that time ice cream was brought back to Europe from Eastern countries. Arabs re-introduced this tradition, which started again from Sicily and was called SORBETTO, originating from the Arabic word SCHERBET (sweet snow) or - according to other interpretations - from the word SCHARBER (to sip) and deriving from the Turkish term CHORBET, sherbet. Ice-cream grew much lighter and more refined through Arab invention: sugar and new fruit juices, mainly citrus fruits, were added. Arabian creativity reached its zenith in Sicily, so rich in fruit and snow, and started a new trend.

In Northern lands the crusaders returning from the Holy Land would bring back precious recipes, and "ice-cream" came back as a new discovery on rich men's tables. Marco Polo brought it back to Venice and had new ideas, such as replacing snow with a mixture of water and saltpetre. But the real diffusion of ice-cream started from Sicily, through the ice-cream makers who had learned their art from the Muslims, adding a touch of their fantasy to it and spreading it about to Naples, Florence and then Milan, Venice and up to France, Germany and England, while in Spain sherbet was known through the commercial links between Portugal and the Eastern Countries. 16th century: the Renaissance. Here are the names of those who made the history of

Italian ice-cream. Ruggeri, a chicken farmer, occasionally a cook, unexpectedly entered the contest "the most amazing food ever seen", sponsored by the Medici family for the most famous cooks in Tuscany. Ruggeri, quite embarrassed, shyly asked to be admitted. He would make a frozen dessert from almost forgotten recipes adding a bit of his creativity. The jury members were conquered by his "sorbetto" They said "we have never tasted anything so delicious". So the winner became famous and was sought all over the country.

Caterina de' Medici, who was born in Florence, brought sorbetto to France. The court of the Medici in Florence held a contest to discover a "singular plate that had never been seen." Giuseppe Ruggeri, a vendor of chicken, showed up and prepared an exquisite sorbet, and became quite famous as a result. When Caterina married Henry II of France, she brought Ruggeri with her to challenge the French chefs. He created splendid concoctions for the many head families of Europe. All of the powerful noble families wanted to know his secrets, but Caterina refused every request. Ruggeri, hated by all the cooks of the capital, was often physically accosted. Eventually he left the recipe in an envelope for Caterina, having written on the back: "with your permission I return to my chicken, hoping they won't remind me of the pleasures of my gelato."

In the same era, Florentine court architect and artist Bernardo Bountalenti was credited with inventing the first gelato to be churned over salt and ice. He built an ice cave in the Boboli Palace and served his "marvels of gelati" at the Medici's many sumptuous banquets.

Gelato can be linked to so many sources that to cover all of them would be impossible. Therefore we will credit the invention of this "**sweet guilt**" to every contributor from the Far East to the farthest West. We know that Gelato was created in Italy in the far North by the people of Dolomiti mountain area, and in the far South by Sicilians.

In the Dolomiti the Gelato was made with milk, cream, sugar, eggs, and natural flavors. Snow was stored in a deep cantina (basement) during the winter. The sale of Gelato was one of the major sources of income for the locals when folks were traveling through the Dolomiti mountains during the warm months.

During this period Gelato was considered to be a rich-man's dessert and few people could afford it. And, as a result of reduced travel in Dolomiti during the winter, income was not sufficient for **Gelato Artisans** to support their families. So they made seasonal migration to Austria, Germany, Switzerland and France to sell Gelato. Consequently, through many decades Italians were dominant in the business of milk-based Gelato in the Northern regions and neighboring countries.

In the far South, Gelato was lower in fat, predominantly water-based, slightly higher in sugar content and was called Sorbetto, known today as **Sorbet**. Similar conditions to the Dolomiti region were used in the South, especially in Sicily where underground storage rooms, some as deep as 30 meters (more than 90 feet) were used to store compacted snow. Likewise, Sicilian **Gelato Artisans** would travel to the neighboring countries to sell their wonderful dessert.

Sicilian ice creams - amongst which the most famous is the traditional "cassata" - were made famous at international level by Caterina de' Medici who introduced the tasty novelty

to the Paris Court, making the King of France taste in 1533 an ice cream prepared by a member of her court.

Until 1660 the best chefs of the Louvre engaged exclusively in the art of ice cream, when the sicilian Procopio Coltelli opened in front of the Comedie Francaise the place which will become later the famous "Cafè Procope".

Coltelli introduced his best number when he invented a new presentation for his ice creams by serving them in egg-shaped glasses, something which definitely spread the fashion in Paris.

In 1851, Jacob Fussel Jr, an entrepreneur milk merchant, founded the first american ice cream factory. In 1888 the first fridge-vagons helped increasing distribution in the United States and the diffusion of ice cream. Mechanical refrigeration definitely replaced the manual in 1902. Until the early 20s, ice cream was a summer product, and autumn was the ending point for its annual production. Domestic freezers hadn't been still invented and ice cream needed to be eaten before it melted.

The prohibitionism era in the 30s caused a brisk interruption in the growth of ice cream consumption, and it was not until the 40s that it begun to pick up again.

In the 50s and 60s sales of ice creams continued to grow, but only in the 70s and 80s, with the appearance of new formulas, ice cream sales really picked up, with increasingly demanding customers asking for new formulas of higher quality.

In England, the first recorded serving of this rare luxury was in 1672, to King Charles II, whose table at a banquet was served a delight denied to those sitting at more humble tables. The first English cookery book to give a recipe was Mrs Mary Eales Receipts of 1718. The recipe did not include a process for making the ice smooth and it must hve been coarse with ice crystals. Ice being rare, ice cream was a luxury for the well off in all countries and had to be made and served immediately, there being no way to store it for any great time.

The second half of the nineteenth century was the period in which ice cream became a treat for ordinary people. Italy continued to lead Europe in ice cremery and immigrants to the UK from thee broughtwith them a tradition and expertise which led to the popular name "Hokey Pokey" which is thought to derive from a corruption of the Italian for "try a little". In other countries too, especially the United States, ice cream gained popularity. The commercial harvesting of ice in cold climates and its transport to population centres was a growth area from the earl nineteenth century. This ice trade made large volumes of ice available at a realistic price and it became possible for ice cream sellers to offer a taste of ice cream to the ordinary person. Ice was sold on glasses which were wiped clean and re-used. These glass "licks" remained in use in London until they were made illegal in 1926 for reasons of public health. Ice cream edible cones were first documented by Mrs Agnes Marshall in her book Fancy Ices of 1894.

The first ice cream bicycles in London were used by Walls in London in about 1923. Cecil Rodd of Walls came up with the slogan "Stop Me and Buy One" after his experiments with doorstep selling in London. In 1924 they expanded the business, setting up new manufacturing facilities and ordering 50 new tricycles. Sales in 1924 were £13,719, in 1927 £444,000. During the war years (1939-45) manufacture of ice cream was severely

curtailed, and the tricycles requisitioned for use at military installations. In October 1947 Walls sold 3,300 tricycles and invested in freezers for shops.

During World War II, pilots placed all the ingredients for ice cream in the tail gunners cockpit. By the time the pilot had landed, the freezing air and the planes vibration had made a delicious bowl of ice cream!

The waffle cone can also be traced back hundreds of years. The first recording of cones being used for serving ice cream was made in a 1888 cookbook.

Before the invention of the waffle cone, ice cream was either licked out of a small glass -- a 'penny lick' -- or taken away wrapped in paper which was called a "hokey pokey". "Hokey pokey" came from the Italian "ecco un poco" which means "here is a little".

Eating gelato, like drinking espresso, is a favorite Italian pastime. It is a time for people to linger for conversation and people watching, and a way to cool down from summers' unrelenting heat. In southern Italy gelato is even eaten for breakfast, served in a fresh brioche with a steaming cup of

Gelato, sorbetto and granita flavors run the gamut from seasonal fresh fruits to popular essences, including coffee, chocolate and liquors. Each bite packs a wallop of sensory stimulation, a celebration of the primary ingredient undisguised by additives or heavy ingredients that mask the original flavor. Though lower in fat, with no more than 6 to 7 percent butterfat, gelato has much more flavor than traditional ice cream. That is because fats tend to coat the mouth, blocking the experience of the fresh and natural flavor. In addition, the best gelaterie use full flavored seasonal products, maximizing the essence of the main ingredients. Another reason for the intense flavor is that gelato is kept at a warmer freezing temperature. The consistency is dense and velvety, with less air beaten into it. The softer texture glides through the mouth, and because it is not so cold, the taste buds do not become numb with freezing, but are open to accept more of the flavor.

The above brief history of gelato is preaped from different sources and provided with some interesting stories of various times and people. In this very moment, the history of gelato is still being written and is looking at further developments in the coming centuries. Gelato, like the people that prepare it and those who enjoy it and like the world around us, is continuously changing and being re-written every day.

It is, therefore, our duty to preserve the finest aspects of this delight by respecting its production rules and processes, continue to bring forward its ancient traditions by using the freshest natural ingredients available and to understand gelato "from the inside", what it is, what it is made of and how can it be made better.

My personal thankfullness goes to all of you which are mastering the art of making gelato, moved by the passion to provide pleasure to people all over the world. Thanks to this passion, gelato is still alive and successfull. Only by maintaining this passion, this italian delight will have more and more centuries of history to come.

