

## Cured meats

*Cured meat tradition in Veneto is without doubt one of the richest and most varied in Italy. First of all there is the most typical of its products, sopressa, which as well as the standard version has as many variants as the cuts of meat that are used in the mixture – fillet, capocollo (neck of pork), chops, tongue – resulting in cold sliced meats that are one of a kind both in appearance and taste. The collection continues with a long list of cured and stuffed meats – prosciutto, ossocollo (smoked neck of pork), pancetta, speck, salami, sausage, luganeghe sausage, cotechino sausage – that arouses more than a little curiosity. Bóndola (or bondiola), for example is the same mixture as cotechino and must therefore be cooked, but its round shape and larger size are the result of it being stuffed into a pig's bladder, giving this product a longer shelf life. Stranger than strange is bóndola con la lingua, which calls for a whole tongue to be inserted into the middle of the bladder or for pieces of it to be mixed with the mixture after brief corning. Lardo is quite another story; this fat is used everywhere in peasant cookery and today, after being ignored for a long time due to its bad reputation, it is once again back in vogue in its spiced version, as a sliced meat and eclectic ingredient in the kitchen. The rarest products are above all horsemeats, traditionally from the Lower Padua area, which was crossed by ancient trade routes that all converged in Venice: at the end of their career, beasts of burden provided the raw materials for a cold cut that still today sees its most unusual product in "sfilacci" (thin filaments of smoke-dried horsemeat). Donkey meat (very rare nowadays) has similar origins, but comes from the mountains and is mainly used as a stuffing in the production of various kinds of salamis. Finally, cured goose meat, which has made a big comeback: originally a necessity of the Hebrew communities to find an alternative to pork, today it owes its popularity to trendy restaurants and their penchant for small goose prosciutti and breasts, also in the smoked version.*

## Cotechino with horseradish, pickled vegetables and polenta

Cotechino al cren e verdure all'agro con polenta

SERVES 4

600 g *cotechino* sausage  
1 horseradish root  
1 l white vinegar  
100 g pickled vegetables  
4 slices Marano corn polenta (see recipe on page 155)  
salt



Put the *cotechino* into a casserole with plenty of cold water and leave to boil gently. When cooked turn off the heat and leave to cool in the cooking water.

Meanwhile prepare the horseradish sauce. Grate the horseradish and dilute with the vinegar to give the desired consistency. If the sauce is too strong, add a grated apple to make it a little sweeter. Finally add salt to taste.

Drain and skin the *cotechino*. Serve three slices on each plate, with the pickled vegetables, horseradish sauce and a slice of polenta.

RECOMMENDED WINE  
COLLI BERICI MERLOT

## Venice-style liver

Fegato alla veneziana

SERVES 4-5

600 g calf's liver  
600 g onions  
2 dl extra virgin olive oil  
vinegar  
flour  
salt and pepper

- 148 Slice the onions and gently fry in a frying pan with the oil. Add a little vinegar and evaporate. Thinly slice the liver, dip in the flour and brown in a drizzle of oil for a few minutes. Add the softened onions, salt and pepper to taste and if necessary a little water towards the end of cooking.

RECOMMENDED WINE  
LUGANA SUPERIORE

## Faggots

Figà nel radeselo

SERVES 4

8 slices of pig's liver  
1 pig's caul  
8 sage leaves  
1 medium onion  
a sprig of parsley  
50 g butter  
extra virgin olive oil  
salt and pepper

- Cut the caul into eight parts and place a slice of liver on each one. Top with a sage leaf and wrap up. Leave the faggots to rest in a cool place for 30 minutes. Melt the butter in a pan with two dessertspoons of oil. Finely slice the onion and soften in the pan with the roughly chopped parsley. Then add the faggots and cook over a moderate heat on both sides until they are lightly browned. When cooked, add a generous amount of salt and pepper and arrange on a hot serving plate, pouring over the contents of the pan. Excellent with fresh baby radicchio leaves in a salad dressing.

RECOMMENDED WINE  
BREGANZE PINOT NERO

