

Tomato Sauce for the Winter: Symmetrical Exchange, Familiar Entrainment and Social Initiation into Italian Domestic Life

Lia Giancristofaro

Abstract

In Italian domestic life, it is quite common to conserve tomatoes for the winter. This essay explores how this practice configures a generalized reciprocity and a type of ritual with familiar entrainment and social initiation. The home-made tomato jars are exchanged as gifts and are part of a generalized reciprocity between family and friends. This custom highlights many hidden meanings for food and its capacity to integrate the social interactions into a “solidarity context”. Following the interpretative methodology proposed by Antonio Gramsci, this folkloric practice can be viewed as a shift from a peasant society to an industrial society. This folkloric practice is extensive and submerged, and consolidates the meanings of the "Intangible Heritage" into an artificial society where the popular expressions of the cultural transitions are entrusted mostly to public folklore. So, a focus on this special food-lore implies a rethink of the official concept of "typical food": since by official and typical food, we mean a political use of tradition, the goal of which is the ethno-business. Conversely, in the unconscious meaning of the making and exchanging of the tomato jars, the economy is intimate and unofficial, in short it is "socially integrated".

Keywords: gift, tomato, family, food-lore, Intangible Heritage

1. Home-made tomato jars for the winter: the Italian pantry

This exchange is a form of social behaviour in which individuals create a relationship, through economic goods shared in time and space. This kind of symbolic exchange reveals the nature of society. This essay explores the use of conserving tomatoes for the winter as an expression of a popular ideology in rural villages which is related to the economies of the past.

Marshall Sahlins emphasized that non-market exchange is constrained by social relationships.

As an anthropologist, I am a native of the practice of conserving tomatoes in the summer for the winter. In central southern Italy and other transnational communities, “the tomato bottles” are produced by families during the summer, when it is hot, stored in the pantry as a resource and consumed during the winter, when the tomato cultivation is impossible unless through artificial and expensive means.

This custom is very common in Southern Italy and families do it not for cost reasons, but for different values. In fact, the malls sell a huge range of cheap tomato sauce. Since the beginning of my ethnography, this custom therefore marked a substantial distinction between the symbolic society (or community), which is a system organized through the pre-modern exchange, and the capitalistic society, which is structured through the production and exchange of goods in some utilitarian meaning, based on individualistic profit.

The tomatoes ripen in summertime. The summertime brings and defines the ritual of “making the tomato bottles”, which is a secular ritual in which the whole family is gathered together. In the Mediterranean area, the event usually happens during the holidays in August, when the tomato production is at its peak and people are free from work. The “tomato day” and the “tomato jars” are today a main cultural marker between communities. In previous generations, the ritualisation of the passing of the seasons was marked by the annual cycle of agricultural production, because back in the 1950s, the peasant families produced and saved food for their own subsistence. In just one generation, this economic structure was revolutionised, and as a sort of moral comfort, many families kept some old customs emotionally related to the time when “we were poor but happy”. After the 1960s and the economic boom, the living conditions changed but despite the convenience of the flavoured industrial product, many families continued to make their own tomato stock for the winter. So, this popular practice followed the human shift from farms to urban houses, from villages to towns. “Emotional bearers” of this tradition are spread all over the world and millions of people perpetuate the memory. Many of them have also carried on the practice. Today, “tomato day” takes place in farmyards and in narrow streets of villages, where the bond with memory and nature becomes stronger, but it also occurs in Rome, Turin, Milan. It lingers between the streets in towns, in the houses and basements of Mediterranean communities living in Toronto, Buenos Aires and Perth, following paths of creativity, exchange, reciprocity, initiation, cultural embodiment and the capacity to plan the future. The pantry model of the tomato includes these values:

- a) the sobriety and propensity “to save local resources” as an additional resource;
- b) the local and parental solidarity to carry out a generalized reciprocity;
- c) the duty to refill the pantry as a way to manage uncertain future prospects;
- d) the duty to work as a team to refill the pantry and to manage the present and future.

This hidden ideology works in parallel with the widespread penetration of industrial society and to the utilisation of the distribution of merchandise, because it does not oppose the technology and the division of labour; however, at the same time it unconsciously fights against consumerism, individualism and the standardisation of human cultures.

In fact, this “pantry” model is collective but not overt. For example, the families involved in the making of the tomato sauce usually purchase certain goods in

shopping malls and superstores, except for tomato sauce, olive oil, wine, sausages, soap, bread, pickles, firewood, garlic and onions. This is because these traditional and basic goods are acquired in different ways and become part of the extraordinary domain of gift and generalized reciprocity.

To document this “home-made food” in ways that resemble the modern industrial and technological ways, I investigated Italian transnational communities from 1993 to 2013. The search involved around 20 towns in Central and Southern Italy which in the twentieth century attracted peasants and farmers from little villages. I then extended my search to the Italian neighbourhoods in Toronto, Perth and Buenos Aires, interviewing Italian immigrants. I opted for conducting qualitative research and collected approximately 300 individual interviews in Southern Italy, Canada, Australia and Argentina. I participated in household daily life in the summertime, making the tomato sauce together.

Of course, the cultural aspects on which we are here to focus, are part of a traditional and local system of “body care” that is related to the final aim of nourishing family members. The art of producing food aims at creating a “generalised reciprocity” in the family. The people involved in this exchange do not expect an immediate return and do not specify the value of this return.

With respect to the “generalised reciprocity”, my focus was set on: a) the ritual shape of economic performance; b) the emotional value of the ritual; c) the techniques that relate to the division of the chores by gender, role and age. All these activities translate into a sort of domestic totem: the tomato jar for the winter, which is the symbol of domestic life.

The “tomato day” is particularly interesting because it involves:

- a) those who will be eating the tomato sauce, or other people very close to those who will be eating this long-conservation food;
- b) the recycled glass, because the containers are recycled each year;
- c) the short chain, because the whole product is locally sourced with tomatoes being procured from gardens or farmers.

In August, the relatives or neighbours gather on a predetermined day and prepare the area with care. They prepare several tons of ripe tomatoes, hundreds of clean bottles and the squeezer machine, the funnels and the machine to seal the bottles. They also prepare the big boiler to sterilize the airtight filled jars, in ways similar to those used by the food industry.

The sauce bottles and jars are boiled on a gas stove or a fire burning garden waste or industrial waste wood, and once the bottles have been boiled, the fire is used as a barbecue and as the centre of the evening’s social activity. The day after, this long-conservation food is stored in the pantry for the wintertime. Obviously, this is not a conscious and organised cultural movement of economic reduction. The step by step process is indeed a sort of industrial process and, when it is inspired by the happiness in reducing the economy, expresses itself in conscious and standardised

models such as car-pooling, slow food, time banking and buying groups (Latouche 2010). Conversely, the distribution and exchange of long-conservation tomato jars creates an unofficial ritual and a generalised reciprocity. These familiar assets are halfway between industry and agriculture, and their meanings were rejected in 1950s sociology as an expression of “amoral kinship comes first” (Banfield 1958). Italian industrialisation, in many Southern and Central areas, has long remained suspended halfway between industry and agriculture; between local and global; between family and national traditions. So, industrialisation has occurred at a slower pace, accompanied by an excessive national debt and unacceptable self-referentiality or corruption among the political elite. Therefore, especially during periods of recession, people can use a network of “cultural shock absorbers”, locally generated over decades of partial mistrust in the capitalistic economy.

2. Social symmetry emerging through the hidden and subversive art of the food-makers

According to economic anthropology, the social distance varies depending on the degree of reciprocity between the partners implementing the exchange of goods. Therefore, in an economic exchange the objective value of the assets is not crucial (Sahlins 1976). The institutional relationship (family, friendship, etc.) generates a generalized reciprocity: for example the gift, hospitality, family duties and also pantry duties before the winter, such as tomato conservation.

On tomato day, as well as in the attribution of the stock of jars of homemade sauce, we find both the generalized reciprocity and the balanced reciprocity, both in the ritual practice and also in the redistribution of goods, which is accorded to the needs of each family involved in the practice. Rarely, in this practice, we find the negative reciprocity, in which the property is symbolically sold to those who cannot produce it at home. Even in the negative reciprocity, the exchange of jars is a symmetrical expression, because the stock is accepted on trust, despite the lack of hygiene and health guarantees. After all, the home-made sauce cannot be officially sold at the market. The long conservation sauce in jars is therefore a commodity made through a symmetrical production and exchanged through a symmetrical circulation.

The ritual practice of making tomato jars for the winter has a cumulative advantage for everyone involved in the practice. The culture of “home-made food” represents a space of freedom in interpersonal and symbolic communication. In this space, food may be received, created or collected: and people still relate to it as a moral commitment and a responsibility to future generations. This Intangible Heritage is alive in the family production of homemade food and also in virtual socialization, because the bearers share the “idea of homemade food” by means of social networks. For example, on facebook, there are many pages developed by fans

and also by critics of this practice: for example, *those who adore it make the sauce in the summer with their grandparents and those who hate tomato day and would rather go to the beach*. Therefore this practice determines group and cultural stratifications. The main characteristic of the “fans” and promoters of the practice is that they tend to be middle class. The stake-holders have peasant origin or were educated with frugal ideology about the family pantry and are zealous in the management of the resources. The drivers of the practice are aged 60-80, most of them are retired. Women also cook and grow vegetables in kitchen gardens for family and friends, while men do maintenance to vehicles and technological tools. Men’s work also relates to the pantry activities set up by women. For example an old man in Pescara adapted a single-phase electric motor (from a broken laundry machine) to create a kneader and tomato-squeezer, to improve his wife’s performance in food and pantry. These creative and industrious crafts are performed by Italians who were educated during the “time of poverty” related to the Second World War (1940-1955), because this generation was brought up to be economically competitive, while respecting the fundamental values of family and local community.

1. *I make many things myself at home, such as cakes, soap, tomato sauce, jams, pickles, pasta, and bread. I sew clothes and style hair for the whole family and the neighbours. Not being lazy is our tradition: we make money by saving money* (Angela, 65, Pescara, Italy).

2. *Everything I keep here in my basement has a story: here you can see my father’s tools; he used to be a carpenter while we were living in the village. Here you can see my tools from when I was working in railway maintenance in Switzerland. Then there are things given to us by friends, things I found next to waste bins, over here there is an incomplete set of wrenches. People throw out objects which have little things wrong with them, I save them from oblivion and give them a new life* (Gianni, 72, Matera, Italy).

3. *Every year we make homemade sausages just as we used to a long time ago in our village in Italy, where we are from. We keep this rich and popular item in our pantry, in preparation for the moment when we will all eat and celebrate together. Our pantry is also our laundry room, but that doesn’t matter!* (Franco S., 65, Perth, Australia).

4. *We are an association of Italian citizens here in Argentina. Every year, we make tomato sauce twice: once separately for the needs of each small family, and once with the Italian Club for the needs of our big family, I mean the Association, where we spend our free time. “El día del tomate” is our main annual event: we buy 6 tons of tomatoes and we make sauce. We work all day long, we fill around 3000 bottles. At*

the end of the day, we dance and sing to celebrate a job well done! (Pasquale D., 66, Berazategui, Argentina).

The garage and basement laboratories are, at the same time, workshops and storerooms: electric motors and drums disassembled from washing machines, carboys, stacked boxes of empty bottles ready for new contents (homemade wine, olive oil, and tomato sauce), metal sheets, bolts, grinders, masonry and painting tools, and homemade salami hung up in to dry. The items are orderly and not chaotic: they are inventoried in the narrative memory, in what structuralism defines as a "savage mind" and what we can now also define as contemporary neo-romantic nostalgia for the limited use of material resources.

Culture is a synergy between body, mind and matter, according to an evolutionary process that proceeds by successive degrees of externalisation and increasingly places adaptive functions out of body (from the amygdala to automated production) and out of mind (from orality to writing and cybernetics). The production processes of both today and yesterday represent an alliance with the material (Leroi-Gourhan 1964). Therefore, this search focuses on production and exchange rather than on consumption. To "make goods at home" means to share in many ways: social creativity and culture flow through each day, even through YouTube and the Web 2.0, retaining the hidden and unofficial aspects of the practice. By making goods, the people engage with each other and create connections with each other: this is demonstrated by those who post triumphant photos and details about tomato day on social networks. Both online and offline, people want to make their mark on the world, to domesticate the present and to build a future.

During the twentieth century, culture was dominated by professional élite producers, who belittled the value of the home maker. Today, just when industrialization and global trade seem to remove any remaining creativity and turn everyone into passive consumers, a vast array of people are making, exchanging and sharing their own goods, ideas and other creative materials (Gauntlett 2011). Some people are rejecting the industrial way of purchasing and consuming, in order to "make" their own products by learning how to do so, yet this is not a conscious and official movement. The economic crisis, limited cashflow and mistrust toward large companies have increased social spaces in which to exchange and reciprocate. These informal spaces are open, happy, flexible and gentle, compared to industrial production and distribution, which is schematic and rationalized, thus the new type of relationship is built up by a creative and conspiratorial freedom.

Therefore, in many familial agendas, the duty to drag the young generation back into old practices is here. Tomato day, as each collective activity about food and pantry, is a remnant of old society, in which people become part of groups through initiation, and of peasant life in Southern Italy during the XIX century (Di Nola 2004). Therefore tomato day, in addition to institutionalized reciprocity, also contains

a further element of solidarity and egalitarian society: the ritual initiation and the aggregation of new family members.

Ritual initiation is a process marked by exchange and ritual that places people in an uninterrupted, ongoing process of exchange (Baudrillard 1976). Initiation is a second birth into a symbolic order that breaks the nexus of natural birth and creates a social life (Remotti 2003). The whole body and its activities can be used to perform such a symbolic exchange. But symbolic exchange, seduction, familiar entrainment and social initiation are the basic aspects of life which are lacking in individualistic and catalistic societies (Baudrillard 1976, Bauman 2003, Di Nola 2004). So, the popular custom of the summer duty of home-made tomato jars for the winter, is still present because it gives a central role to symbolic exchange, to familiar entrainment and to social initiation.

3. Why do you make at home what you can buy ready-made? The hidden religion in the food-lore

For the tomato-makers, the symbolic reasons are more important than the sensory reasons. These items are good to think about, thus they are good to eat (Harris 1985), and are also good to make, hence they become a popular tradition. In addition to that, through the preparation of a large stock of tomato, this popular tradition encourages the consumption of vegetables. Tomato sauce is healthy and it helps to prevent many fatal or debilitating diseases, so the tomato culture operates as a sort of free and public welfare system. The use of tomato sauce has spread all over the world: millions of people now eat food with tomato sauce produced by large-scale agriculture, manufactured by large-scale industry, and distributed by large-scale traders. However, the people I interviewed stated that they get “no pleasure in eating the industrial tomato sauce”, and they settle for it “only when the homemade sauce is not available”. On Sunday lunch, when the family comes together, the “homemade sauce” is appraised and considered “superior to the industrial sauce”, which is considered “low quality” for many emotional reasons. The “homemade sauce” is better “because we made it and we personally checked the tomatoes one by one”, “because it represents a local and domestic product”, “because it does not produce waste packaging”, “because it reminds us of our childhood, summertime, the village, our grandparents and good memories”.

In fact, the domestic production of tomato sauce reduces packaging and has environmental and economic benefits. So, the food-lore of “homemade tomato sauce” saves “energy” twice: it saves energy from an ecologic point of view, but it also saves energy from an emotional point of view, because this social activity strengthens relationships starting from the experience of “making things together”.

5. *My community never experienced a summer without making tomato bottles. I have beautiful memories of my childhood, when my grandparents were leading the “tomato day”. As in the past, “tomato day” is still the most important day in our summer, we love making tomato sauce with our children and we keep up this healthy and exciting tradition* (Stefano, 46, L’Aquila, Italia).

6. *In our neighbourhood, we all have Southern backgrounds and every year we make tomato sauce together using recycled bottles. We buy tomatoes, at least 3-4 quintals. When the farmer delivers the tomatoes, we prepare the workspace outside, we do the work and we clean up afterwards. Nobody has ever complained or called the police about that. We fill 800 bottles. To squeeze all this tomato, my husband created an electric squeezer with a giant funnel and a two-stroke engine, and a compressed air machine to seal the filled bottles* (Patrizia, 45, Milano).

7. *I am American but spend my holidays with my grandparents in Vaughan, Ontario, Canada; they have an Italian background, they were born in a little village near Salerno, in Italy. I make pummarola with them every summer. It is fun. I like the “pummarola day”! Grandma gives me pummarola jars to take home* (David, 21, Miami, USA).

The small-scale society (or folk society) has occupied a privileged place in cultural anthropology. The village square is the prototype of the cultural meeting in ethnography and is still the place of the bombastic celebrations of public folklore. By “public folklore” today, the anthropologists mean the traditions played out beyond their original context (Padiglione 1978, Baron Spitzer 1992). A sample of public folklore are the festivals, held as “tradition” to demonstrate the affection of the communities towards their imaginary past, and often manipulated by the local hegemonies to maintain a social and political control. Conversely, in the hidden world of houses and basements, the communities are balanced and reassuring. Here, the ethical-religious meanings are very different from the contemporary ideas of the “official traditions”, which are aimed at emphasising local identity. The eclectic rhythms of industrial culture and the political use of official traditions have buried this human dimension, which has officially disappeared, but is still alive as a re-invention and re-evaluation of the memory. Public folklore now dominates the landscape of heritage and with “authenticity” as the easier place in which to identify heritage, the ethnocentric and parochial perspectives are still capable of evoking some easy morality. So, today the tradition often expresses a violent claim of rights, which is politically managed and opportunistically considered as “atavistic” (Giddens 1998: 53-68). It is not easy to overcome these problems and to shift the idea of heritage away from the self-referential position, in which the heritage is identified by an element of public folklore that seems to emphasize the dangerous dimension of subjectivism. Even in the definition given by the European Landscape Convention

(2000), there are many abstract and generic references to the cultural aspects, perceived as individual and “natural”. This carries many risks, such as aesthetic drifts, or concealment of the complex networks that activate choices, responsibility and representations. The Intangible Heritage today should not be only the “official range” of traditions and monuments, but also a deep and reflective activity, with a far-reaching influence. It is an essential part of the culture in which people live and which people will leave to future people. What can we, or should we, forget? What memories can we enjoy, regret or learn from? This advice was launched by the 2003 UNESCO International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which employs a historical, sociological and anthropological methodology, in order to help keep the popular memories far from the ethnocentric and non-sustainable trend (Convention for the Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO, Paris 2003, art. 1-2-3, 14, 15).

In public folklore, because of the powerful political interests involved, the official stake-holders often tend to get caught up in the political claim of their cultural uniqueness. That is the reason why, in the current cultural complexity, there is a need to return to the matter of the material culture and to perform an anthropology of Intangible Heritage. This return to the hidden dimension of material culture could be helpful especially in Italy, where the local and hegemonic policies consider Intangible Heritage – and thus also the food heritage and Mediterranean Diet - as a sort of static and untouchable guarantee of authenticity. Material culture, instead, involves a strong theoretical literature on themes of relationship, exchange, gift and reciprocity (Wilk 1996).

In the cultural domain of food, unknown spaces, unfamiliar surroundings and different cultures represent a cultural danger that modern man shares with primitive man (Douglas 1966). Even the political uses of this cultural danger are constant, and produce the official policy of traditional food as a sort of “magic resource”: this practice provides a reassurance, because it capitalises on the past use in a mythical and ritual way (De Martino 1959). Traditional food facilitates a political use of tradition and ethno-business (Comaroff 2009). Conversely, in the unofficial and unconscious world of the pantry-makers, the business aspect is absent because the sale is prohibited by national bureaucracy. The folklore of tomato sauce can still provide solidarity and reciprocity. This religious and supportive dimension of foodlore develops until it is a hidden and unconscious policy, since when it becomes an open policy, it degenerates into a static and standardized dimension, becoming a hegemonic construction of the *typicity*.

The material domain of “tomato day” is a type of resistance against a sense of loss as if it were an unconscious effort to oppose the material and differentiated person with the modern enchantment of the abstract person (Baudrillard 1976). The current order of things does not guarantee a reassuring concept of life, and indeed reduces people to anguish (De Martino 1959, Di Nola 2004). Therefore, this level of

submerged heritage continues to reproduce and distribute its styles, along new and unimaginable roads of social communication, as it challenges, daily, public powers, expressing what seems to be a “strange truth”. In this context, information and new technologies develop through internet communication, giving life to new landscapes, emphasising the dynamic and interactive character of folklore (Frauenfelder 2010, Gauntlett 2011). The cultural homelands today include the transnational contexts, fed by the local contexts to which the heritage refers. Everyday folklore can still tame the industrial and global world, which otherwise seems unthinkable and unmanageable. As numerous authors have said, globalisation cannot be stopped, but this does not imply that there is a standardisation of worlds and cultures (Sahlins 1976, Hannerz 1992, Appadurai 1996). Folklore, wrongly considered to be abstract, reactionary, static and decontextualized, is instead a phenomenon which is exuberant, local, progressive, reactive, sustainable.

4. To save goods for the future: a metaphor for cultural capitalization

Local creativity and all the ways to produce and attach meaning to popular life is today the scientific subject of folklore as an ethnographic study. However, the notion of folklore still carries contradictory meanings. In Italy, an official interest in folklore for propaganda purposes is associated with the fascist regime and also with identity, which sees folklore as a sort of static and decontextualised memory. This is particularly evident when it comes to food and to the official policy of the “typicity”. If we are intellectually honest, we can understand the dynamics of folklore in a broad and correct way, having no difficulty in exploring the contemporary routine and ethical behaviours.

Traditional and popular culture establish a fruitful relationship with the technological and global world. Therefore, the folklore does not disappear as a consequence of technological and economic dynamics, because it constantly rebuilds around the cultural process of modernization. So maybe, the modernity only involves the expansion of horizons to existential, spatial, temporal and social levels. The classic model of folklore is now unreliable, because it fences the folklore within the village dimension, within the oral transmission and within the low social status of the agents. Since the boundaries are dissolved through modernisation, three new factors are useful to detect “what is folklore today”: firstly, the cultural creativity that moulds and shapes local worlds starting from the increased availability of resources; secondly, the mechanisms of proximity and domestication; thirdly, the social symmetry. Therefore, the practice of tomato day and the popular custom of the pantry are very effective examples of contemporary folklore as the resistance of human and symmetric relationships within an industrial and individualistic society.

Inside the global world, people still live in local worlds, called cultural homelands (De Martino 1978), and this can be interpreted in many ways. I personally disagree with the despondency theory that focuses on the universalistic dynamics of a mercantile system that made the cultural contexts increasingly similar and undifferentiated in the world (Lévi-Strauss 1955, Wolf 1982). The autonomy of culture and the crucial role of differences is still resilient, as emphasised by the submerged function of the cultural homelands (Sahlins 1976).

The ethnological literature places the popular actions, beliefs and items in the “folklore enclosure” according to their informality, localism and non-standardization. Instead, the popular actions, beliefs and items seemed part of the mass culture when they were official, intensive and standardized. A further characteristic of folklore actions and items is that they have such an “old style”: the bearers say that they have been practising since time immemorial and as such that it is atavistic; they keep the heritage alive by passing it on from one generation to the next, for rhetorical reasons.

The folklore also displays a “creative model of simplicity”: the folklore items, such as traditional recipes, are oral, anonymous and variable. This means that the actions/items are handed down by proximity, i.e. we do not know who the author is, nor do we know who changes and updates the recipe. Therefore, folklore can be considered as a collective process and is a major competitor to industry. Despite being popular, folklore is not “mass production” because of its localism and lack of industry standards, and is elusive and subversive to the official industrial production. As does the tomato sauce, the folklore exists in garages and basements rather than on the upper floors of buildings. In this hidden world, I received a confidential welcome, discovering that folklore is alive and well in the towns, behind the walls of neighbourhoods with their monotonous routes and solitary benches. Open doors reveal unexpected worlds of laborious creativity, accompanied by rich socialization rituals, such as coffee breaks with *limoncello* and homemade pastries. This reproduction of folklore, while transferring peasant habits into cities and beyond their original context, is innovative, hidden and private.

Far from being “public folklore”, far from being big agrarian festivals without farmers, far from being the purist expressions seeking identity, this is a private and informal folklore in everyday life. Through the private folklore, people assert their loyalty to the material resources more than to the ideologies. In this hidden world, the general frames of public culture are marginal. Indeed, the state, welfare, public education, the food market, public folklore, the movements and the global information flows are delivered to people without needing to focus on the processes of their production and distribution (Hannerz 1992). Therefore, these forces do not mobilise people, and people become aware of them only when they collapse or betray high expectations (Miller 2008: 181-183).

As tomatoes in the Mediterranean area ripen in the summer, folklore invented a popular and ritual cooperation for the tomato sieving and conservation, which

enables a deferring of its consumption. Before the second industrial revolution - which in the Italian suburbs came after the Second World War - this technique allowed the farmers to add value to their work. In the XIX century, the tomato sauce was boiled, salted, dried and stored in jars as *concentrate*. The tomato concentrate helped to set up the Mediterranean diet which, although simple, is rich in nutrients.

Because of its simplicity, since the nineteenth century, tomatoes have been used as a main ingredient, becoming a symbol of Italian and Mediterranean culture (Gentilcore 2010). This popular style of preserving tomatoes, was changed during the XX century because of the popularisation of the chemical processes of pasteurization and sterilization, made possible by the greater quantity of disposable glass containers. The popular use, in short, has found a solution for the excess of scrap produced by industrial civilisation: instead of throwing away the waste from the industrial production of beer and juice, the popular practice preserves the empty bottles and jars and makes the empty bottles and jars a resource, through the practice of the sterilization of glass bottles. This defined a new good and popular totem: a stock of bottles of long-life homemade tomato sauce, simply referred to as “the tomato in a bottle” as a processed resource. People who belong to this cultural circuit use this metonymy to indicate, in addition to the food content, a particular style of Mediterranean life that enriches food manufacturing with positive emotions, proving that processing resources is a way to improve the overall quality of food and social relations.

Modern technology, such as the electric sieve, used in this popular and traditional manufacturing, demonstrates that folklore is already equipped with the capacity to deal with and overcome the problems of daily life. In the past decades, many scholars of folklore have underestimated or denied this power. Now it is evident: the power of folklore conceptually raises its culture to a level that seems stronger and more autonomous in comparison to the state of fragility that would characterise a subordinate culture. The decrease of the official economy does not mean a reduction in levels of autonomy. Hence, this folkloric search involves not only economic behaviours, but also in a critical way the public assessments of what is “heritage” that are often established, misunderstanding the ideas of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO 2003 (Palumbo 2006). In Italy, this domestic application of anthropological skills is focused on the social sustainability and on the reflexive processes of inventorying the Intangible Cultural Heritage, mostly achieved through the ethnography of public folklore. In this globalised world, many normative actions around Intangible Heritage (UNESCO Convention 2003; EU Convention of Faro; several specific national and regional laws) produce this wide dimension of a return to one’s origins. In this engagement with “heritage communities” and the “heritage safeguard”, the Italian anthropology still operates - as Gramsci wrote - with people who struggle against power and governance, now identified as those who struggle with any kind of official lifestyle.

Of course, in Italy there is a public folklore that expresses identity and focuses on the past: this kind of folklore is unfortunately enhanced by the institutions and needs an inclusive ethnography to defuse its racial drifts. Beside this, intertwined with it, there is also a folklore that faces the future. This means to search for heritage that faces the future, more than heritage that borders identity.

5. An ethical choice: heritage that faces the future or heritage that borders identity?

A “bricoleur”, or a maker, is not simply someone who owns the instructions to manage an industrial product that aims at the optimisation of daily life under the global model. A “true bricoleur”, a true maker, is not someone who puts together a piece of “packed furniture”, or someone who buys a spare part to repair tools with a modern engineering spirit. A “bricoleur”, or a maker, is someone who continuously processes the locally available materials and uses new ways to “combine things” in a creative way. He embodies the ecological spirit of a sustainable economy in contrast to the constant supply of replacements emanating from the world machine that is both industrial and global. He does not buy things, but chooses to barter, swap, reuse and recycle. His cultural processes are sort of retrospective: he gathers a set of tools and materials, he makes an inventory, and lastly, and most importantly, he intertwines a type of dialogue with things, in choosing possible answers to his momentary problem, to face the future (Lévi-Strauss 1962). The Italian culture is marked by the tradition of domestic chores. Here, the traditional, creative and adaptive connection between hands and brain was hegemonically identified by Humanism and Renaissance and after the Second World War was still reproduced by people who followed their work with a spirit of self-denial, in the productive areas of Northern Italy as well as abroad. The popular scepticism towards industry and the irreversible crisis of 2008 mark the private change of this attitude. Today more than ever, people experiment with under-employment and hidden work, trying to carve out a space of employment conceived of as a welfare parachute. Maybe this cultural skill should have been converted into a new economic system at the beginning of the new millennium, when the crisis in the industrial neo-liberal model first appeared. Unfortunately, institutional policies blindly continued to follow the path of the official economy and of infinite growth, implementing a “soft totalitarianism” based on the psychological dependency of local citizens by the global market (Latouche 2010).

Daily life is still one of the main cultural dimensions that triggers social competition and political choice (Hannerz 1992). In the private dimension, some people criticize the “institutional imperative” to purchase the “specialised product”. Some people try to overcome the hypnotic enchantment and the redundancy of information through a self-reliant production, through redressing and reviewing,

through recycling, gift, exchange, barter and creativity. This solution helps also to overcome the flattening of space and time, and let people consider the background and to plan the future. The bricoleurs, or the makers, are mindful of the “scarcity background” and they have opted for a renewal of it as “the most up-to-date solution”, without any illusion that the official claim about “infinite growth” may be true. In Italy, during the 1950s, the population had daily limits and so they learned to preserve goods. The megalomania of the neoliberal model, which gave to western popular masses the illusion that they can feast every day, generated private debt and the current inability to grow according to the classic economic model. Self-restraint was officially removed by the neoliberal model, but it still exists as a social choice and a cultural opportunity. Furthermore, the self-restraining spirit of the makers is strengthened by the mythical-ritual mechanism, which is a manipulation and domestication of materials, time and space, because repetition, through gestures and narratives, allows the historical elimination of negativity (De Martino 1959). Self-reliant production is practiced as a “capital gain”, as the achieving of well-being, or the earning of social prestige and the satisfaction of being popular makers. For the interviewed families, the self-reliant production is also a “behaviour of honour”, and certainly has a role to play as an input of values within social reciprocity. Apparently, the makers lose their free time, but earn in terms of honour and social existence (Pitt-Rivers 1977).

8. *Here, whoever “makes things” is frowned on. The women are generous and they are the leaders, they run a true social power. Between neighbours, they compete to see who is better at making tomato sauce, traditional cakes, huge meals for the neighbourhood feasts* (Luigi, 47, Pescara).

9. *The girls are now half-hearted and always unhappy despite their young age, they have no honour! On the other hand, their grandmothers are very busy and they invite people over to have lunch together. They organise common chores, work a lot and are always happy! Thanks to these industrious ladies, families have got ahead and we still keep this positive attitude here in Canada* (Tony, 68, Vaughan, Canada).

Today, the bricolage plays an important role in bringing order into the human life. This order is created not only by assigning meanings but also by encouraging agency and exchange in a familiar landscape. Semiotics and exchange are present in all cultural actions, and overlap each other. The paradigm of self-production comes from the pre-modern experience that has configured the autarkic production. Experiences, beliefs and language are all mutually interrelated, so we may assume that this dimension of belief could be a sort of religious experience. So, the bricolage and the exchange of these kinds of goods are a sort of sacred experience: what other reason could there be for taking on the stress of producing a food that can be bought

at low prices? The bricolage enables not (only) a monetary saving, but allows the person to focus on his/her own surroundings, on his/her human desire to domesticate and share the world. These niches of traditional economic culture are exactly what the word economy historically means: the rules of the house, because οἶκος (oikos) means house or goods, and νόμος (nomos) means its rules.

This kind of symmetry is a system in which the goods have a different value and in which the main feature is trust, that is the origin of each social and cultural bond (Godelier 1996). To my point of view, this kind of symmetry can be interpreted as a human strategy to alleviate both existential and economic anxiety (De Martino 1959, 1978). I personally consider this hidden intangible heritage as a main cultural heritage. The industrial economy rejects the economic model of makers as an irrational, anti-institutional, inefficient, and dispersive practice, because it is not based on mathematical calculation. However, this Intangible Heritage is more logical and sustainable than the industrial economy, because it is aimed at social inclusion, voluntary restraint and environmental protection. This kind of not-public folklore today regenerates itself as a contemporary and sustainable popular philosophy. It is, more than ever, a cultural production which should be held in high esteem and studied, to understand the main role that unofficial cultures have in complex societies, as important as Gramsci stated in 1929 (Gramsci 1966).

Today, the meanings of "ethnicity" support a kind of mystification that misrepresent the social dimension of contemporary life and avoid any possible mediation and solution. Therefore, more than confine "ethnicity" into nostalgia through "typical food" and "public folklore", it would be useful to look for a common denominator between cultures, and find this common denominator in making and exchanging food in a symmetrical way. In this way, science can mediate between local cultures and reflect on the rapport between universalism and particularism: a cultural translation that seems to be the mission and the future of cultural science applied to food and its symmetrical exchange.

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