

Santa Lucia Movie and Traditions for Her Feast Day

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SANTA LUCIA is the patron of our village in Sicily: Termini - Imerese, on the coast, outside of Palermo. To celebrate her life and martyrdom for the faith 1700 years ago, the Diocese of Syracuse in Sicilia is producing a film about her life.

SYRACUSE, Sicily, SEPT. 1, 2003 (ZENIT.org-Avvenire).- The province of Syracuse will finance the production of a film on the life of its patroness St. Lucy, to celebrate 1,700 years since her martyrdom. According to the website source (<http://www.zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=40201> Dated: 2003-09-01) "The Life of St. Lucy" is going to be produced as a movie

The release related: "The project has been entrusted to Milan film director Giovanni Virgadola, author of other cinematographic works on the lives of saints, such as St. Elizabeth of Hungary and St. Agatha. Casting for the role of St. Lucy will begin this month. The project is supported by Bishop Giuseppe Costanzo of Syracuse, who has presided over the committee that is researching the saint's life.

Of noble lineage, Lucy's faith experience was influenced by that of another young Sicilian martyr: Agatha. In an apparition, Lucy saw Agatha, who told her: "As the city of Catania was sanctified through me, so through you the city of Syracuse will be saved."

Lucy decided to consecrate herself to God and to sell all her possessions and give the proceeds to the poor. When a would-be suitor, a pagan, realized he wouldn't be able to marry Lucy, he accused her before the authorities for her Christian faith. Lucy was martyred on December 13, in the year 304 AD.

Terminese, (The people of Termini-Imerese, Sicilia, Province of Palermo) celebrate Santa Lucia on her feast day December 13th, by fasting from ground wheat in any form, including bread and pasta, rolls and sweets! We eat cuccia, whole grain winter wheat that has been boiled and stirred for hours the previous day. We serve it as a warm or cold cereal (it is thick like gruel) with milk, sugar and if you like, cinnamon/nutmeg. We also serve it cuccia mixed with garbanzo beans as a luncheon or supper dish by itself, or over rice That is Italian/Sicilian Soul Food! Delicious!

Cuccia and Sauteed Chick Peas (Garbanzo Beans)

Drain canned chick peas; (garbanzo beans); heat olive oil in a non stick skillet, with a little onion that you saute in it, mix in chick peas, (and some cuccia if you have it on hand) season with salt, pepper and garlic, fresh minced or garlic powder,

if you wish. Stir till beans are softened, and warmed through, add a little water as needed, but do not reduce the chick peas (garbanzo beans) to paste. Keep them round in their form. Add cuccia if you have it. Serve over wild, brown or white steamed rice.

(Cuccia can be frozen and used at a later time, after it is cooked.)

To make cuccia, buy a pound of white winter wheat at the health food store. Soak for two days, changing the water every day. On the third day, change water and cover wheat about four inches over the top and bring to boil, turn down heat to medium, stir often with wooden spoon. Keep a teapot of boiling water handy to pour into the wheat should the water be needed to keep from scorching. Cook till wheat pops open and innards are soft, looks like wall paper paste or gruel. Serve cold or warm, with milk or cream sugar, sweetener and cinnamon if desired for breakfast on Santa Lucia's Day, and use it for lunch or dinner with the chick peas, onions (recipe above) over rice or just eat it as a vegetable side dish. Enjoy.

One day as I was relating the story of Santa Lucia, and dishing out the cuccia to our five sons at breakfast on December 13th, one little guy, (Michael or Giovanni) piped up after hearing the story, "Gee Mom, is this St. Lucy's eyes?" And the other one chimed in "Cuccia looks like little eyes!" As it does!

Terminese also traditionally eat lenticce (lentils) with spinach over rice, or steamed rice with meatless sauces, vegetables, or Rissotto of any kind without meat or bread added. Risotto Teminese and Lenticce with Spinach recipes will be sent on request or will be posted following this article if space permits, and at the request of your webmaster. For recipes, send a SASE to Franchina Communications International, Inc. PO Box 3238; Dayton, OH 45401-3238 or e mail: franchinacom@aol.com)

On December 13th, Terminese prepare and serve other meatless/flourless dishes like vegetable frittatas, salada verdi, and other vegetables/dishes mentioned above in thanksgiving and celebration! St. Lucy is the patron of the eyes and it is our Terminese custom, through our prayers and sacrifice we ask her intercession to pray for us to the Lord, for our good eyesight and against diseases and problems of the eyes. We eat meatless dishes as a little sacrifice and in thanksgiving for favors already received, and prayers answered.

(People ask, "Why don't you pray directly to God instead of to His Mother and His Saints?") We do that too, but realize God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) likes to hear from His consecrated virgins and canonized saints who go to bat for us when needed, and since they have a special place already with Him they put in a good word for us! We like to read and study their lives because they are good models and teach us a lot too! Italy has always been a Catholic country. And while many Italian Americans and Italians are not Catholic, it is found that the customs and traditions and foods eaten and prepared, do revolve around Catholic religious and regional

celebrations in Italy.

(Note: When I did a television series on various ethnic groups, while it was not a religious program, it was found that most ethnic traditions and customs of the world, stem from religious rituals and celebrations in their respective heritage; albeit, in the Judeo-Christian, European, Orthodox, Oriental or South American traditions.)

My family has always kept our Italian customs and traditions and from young the boys looked forward to the various foods and things we did on certain days in celebration and/or remembrance. They have carried them on even when they are away and are established in their own homes. It is never too late to start traditions and customs. We find that the young adults and young families are very receptive to these and are eager to learn and practice them. Even non-Italians enjoy hearing and practicing the traditions of our ethnic group. Locally, our Italian cooking and culture classes are very popular during the winter months. We hold them once a month from September through April at our OSIA home, Bella Villa in Kettering, Ohio. (www.johnpirelliosia.org)

Santa Lucia's Story

Santa Lucia (St. Lucy) was promised by her mother to a prince. The story goes that her eyes were put out by him when she refused to marry him. As a rebuffed suitor who wanted to marry her, he could not understand she had given her life to Jesus and would not marry. He was a pagan and told her, "If I cannot gaze into your beautiful eyes, no one else is going to see them either!" The story is that after her eyes were put out, they regrew more beautiful than before. The prince again sent soldiers for her and had her arms tied to wild horses to pull her apart! But instead, the horses knelt before her, and would not pull her apart! She eventually was martyred for her faith on December 13, 304 AD in Syracuse, Sicilia.

Swedish People Love Santa Lucia Too!

Several years ago, I participated in an exhibit at Bergamo Center for LifeLong Learning in Dayton, Ohio for their annual celebration of International Winter Holidays featuring Italian customs, traditions and artifacts. A group of Swedish people stopped by my booth and exclaimed, "What are you doing with our Saint Lucy in Italy?"

The Swedish people know her too! It was a surprise to me that they celebrate Santa Lucia's feast day throughout Sweden! We do not know how St. Lucy came to be known there, but the Swedes claim her as their patron! We told them she was from Sicily and they were visibly surprised. (They dropped their teeth; their mouths fell down to their belly buttons!)

I told them "St. Lucy must have had the gift of bilocation like Padre Pio!" We could not figure out how she came to be known in Sweden and became so popular there as she lived in Sicily! We are still investigating that mystery! The Swedes

celebrate December 13th with the youngest children bringing parents breakfast in bed comprised of coffee and hot cross buns!

Santa Lucia is noted for bringing food to the poor, and is pictured by the Swedes dressed in white with a red sash and a wreath of candles on her head. She is noted for bringing bread and food into a darkened forrest or woods to the poor and that is how they saw her approaching and she lit her way on the path. The little Swedish girls dress like Santa Lucia on her feast day with white dresses and a wreath of candles on their heads, while serving their parents and throughout the day!

Sundays at the Movies Italian Style

The movie being made about Santa Lucia in the diocese of Syracuse, Sicilia sounds very interesting and promises to be worth viewing. I hope we can get copies of it in the USA so we can show it in our Italian organizations and schedule a Santa Lucia Dinner. The Dayton Sons of Italy, John Pirelli #1633 schedules Sundays at The Movies during the winter months. We gather on a Sunday afternoon about 3 o'clock to watch an Italian movie or video followed by an animated discussion and then break bread together with a potluck cover dish feast! No one is ever disappointed!

Syracusa, Sicilia, is also the city in which the Madonna of Tears has been made known. A picture of The Blessed Mother issued forth tears in the twentieth century; the picture has been tested and positively approved and ascribed by the Catholic Church as authentic. This will be discussed in a forthcoming article: The Account and Message of Our Lady of Syracuse.

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