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• **Christmas Edition** •



# It all starts with the smell of pancakes



Let us begin with the fair that kicks off the Christmas season: **the fair of St Andrew!** This ancient fair takes place at the end of November and has always been, for all Gorizians, **the time of year when the magic of Christmas begins to be felt.** **It may be the lights, it may be the stalls, or perhaps the smell of sugary pancakes.**

“Once upon a time, **Piazza del Corno** came alive in the early hours of the morning with the arrival of the mountain people’s carts.

**Piazza Sant’Antonio** was crowded with people of all ages and social classes, attracted by the famous **Zamperla equestrian circus**. Six musicians in brightly decorated uniforms played their instruments accompanied by a drummer and the thunderous beats of a drum. The arcades of the Convent of St. Francis, also on St. Anthony’s Square, housed the boots of the Merna shoemakers, in such numbers that they could fit an entire army. Next to them, junk dealers offered a variety of objects, from gold-embroidered tailcoats to battered bicycles.

**Piazza Grande (today’s Piazza Vittoria)** was the beating heart of the fair, with a long line of multicoloured tents attracting crowds eager to shop at bargain prices.

The St Andrew’s Fair was a lively and chaotic event, offering a wide range of products and entertainment.

**At nightfall, the crowds would leave the city with baskets and panniers full of goods, while some sweet vendors would stay until Christmas.”**

“Gorizia d’altri tempi”, Ranieri Mario Cossar, Edizioni Libreria Adamo, 1975



# Christmas in Gorizia: ancient customs and traditions

**Ice skating in Valdirose:** the Pordon confectionery announced the event with a sign: “**Skating today**”. The atmosphere was festive, with the band playing waltzes by Suppè and Strauss. One could enjoy smoked sausages with horseradish and Bohemian beer in the heated pavilion while watching the skaters.

**Fir market:** Piazza del Duomo, the heart of the city, was transformed into a lively market where the inhabitants of Gorizia could buy **fir trees from the Tarnova forests to decorate their homes.**

**In Culot’s shop, at the beginning of Via Rastello, one could find Christmas decorations** such as cribs with wooden figurines, coloured candles, silver stars, gold threads and everything needed to decorate the Christmas tree.

**In the shop window, a richly decorated fir tree would appear,** whose decorations would amaze the young passers-by.

**The less wealthy, on the other hand, preferred the window of an old tobacconist’s shop,** located opposite the church of the Ursuline Mothers (today the church no longer exists, but it stood between Via delle Monache and Via Rotta). In this little shop, for a few cents you could buy a **sheet with the hut and figures of the crib.**

**Gifts and presents:** merchants used to present their customers with Christmas presents, **such as Mandul almonds.**

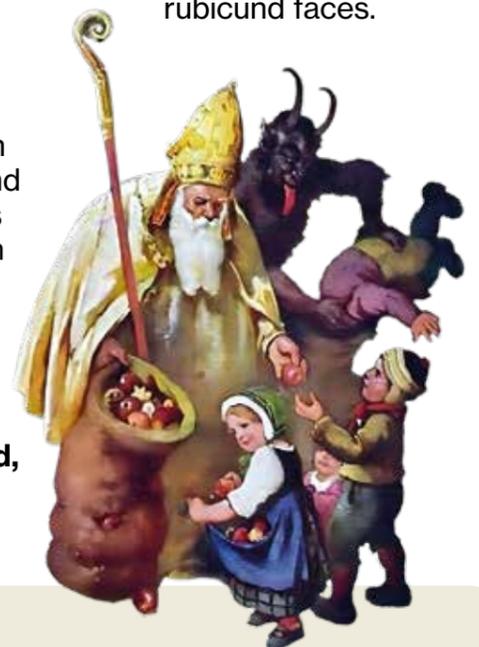
**St Nicholas: 6 December, St Nicholas’ Day, was a much-awaited feast day for the children of Gorizia, who received gifts such as dried fruit and oranges.**

The tradition had elements in common with that of Friuli and Valcanale, where St Nicholas was accompanied by devilish figures that struck fear into the children.

**In Valcanale and other mountain villages, these figures are called Krampus. In Gorizia, on the other hand, there was the diàu (devil)!**

**Saint Lucia: Saint Lucia brought gifts to the girls. On the evening of 12 December, girls would put a stocking in the window and the next morning would find it full of sweets.**

It was also customary to give wooden dolls with rubicund faces.



## SOME READING SUGGESTIONS

Curious to explore the legends of this land? Run to the bookshop and discover:

**Leggende del Friuli e delle Alpi Giulie,** Anton von Maily, LEG EDIZIONI, 2018

If, on the other hand, you would like to learn more about Gorizia’s traditions, scan the qr code below.



**Gorizia d’altri tempi,** Ranieri Mario Cossar, Edizioni Libreria Adamo, 1934

Looking for some ideas for the Christmas menu? Browse through the excerpt by Roberto Zottar.

**I cibi tradizionali delle festività. Un anno di saperi e sapori,** Roberto Zottar, Centro per la conservazione e la valorizzazione delle tradizioni popolari Borgo San Rocco



“At Christmas the main signs were the **log**, the **pine tree** and the **crib**. The former found meaning from the pagan cult of the household Lares in placing a large log, in some cases the entire trunk of a mulberry tree (morar), at the head of the hearth, which burned throughout Christmas Eve.

The Christmas tree made its appearance in the Goriška region probably around 1790, with the reforms instituted by Joseph II. Set on a wooden base, with a star, candles of all colours, little flags, silver-plated nuts, sugared donuts, chocolates, apples, pears, and baubles, it did not do away with the custom of the nativity scene, and for decades, the custom of nativity scenes set up in cottages on the outskirts of town, a legacy of the sacred medieval Christmas plays, was also maintained”.

**Petali di Gorizia. Storia - Arte - Tradizioni - Persone, Vanni Feresin, edito dal Centro per la conservazione e la valorizzazione delle tradizioni popolari di Borgo San Rocco, 2015**

### VISIT RECOMMENDATION: THE BEAUTIFUL NATIVITY SCENE OF THE POOR CLARES!

Every year, a wonderful animated nativity scene is set up at the Poor Clare Monastery ‘Totus Tuus Maria’ in Gorizia!

It is located in Piazza S. Antonio 2/B, and can be visited during the Christmas period.



**“Christmas Eve was celebrated with great solemnity in old-fashioned Gorizian families.**

At midday, a breakfast was taken.

At around eighteen o'clock, open heavens, the meal began, planned by the good hostess down to the smallest detail.

**The table was a true masterpiece.** On the white linen tablecloth (mantil), woven in-house by Friulian weavers, were, in golden cornucopias of rushes, the delicate camellias grown by Alfredo Eder in the greenhouses of Carlo de Ritter, co-owner of the sugar factory in Via dei Cappuccini. The courses followed one another incessantly. There were foxfish, sea bass, gilthead bream, sole and the ever-present marinated eel from Marano lagunare, served on the ornate plates of Gorizia majolica maker **Pietro Braus** (or Brautz, see page 5) and Foglietti. “At the first ringing of the bells for midnight mass, he would find our elders at the tasty ballotte accompanied by the Cividino. Then the tree candles were lit and the distribution of gifts to family members began. The long-awaited moment had finally arrived! The flickering flames flickered in the silver threads, which glowed like strands of blende, and a refreshing coniferous scent wafted into the room from the fir branches, which burned in contact with the flame, sending bluish sprays of fiery resin around them. The diners then moved on to the traditional game of bingo. Each number drawn was accompanied by a lepid frieze”.

Gorizia d'altri tempi, Ranieri Mario Cossar, Edizioni Libreria Adamo, 1975

# Christmas Eve: a laid table and the chime of midnight

## Some nursery rhymes, old-time Christmas songs... and curiosities



On the night of St Nicholas, the boys, before going to bed, would place a plate or a shoe on the window sill so that St Nicholas could leave gifts there. In the morning they would find - in addition to the delicacies that could be bought in the shops of Glessig, Paulin or Alpi - toys from Lazzar and Potatzky, such as boxes with brightly painted wooden houses (ciazùtis), wooden trumpets (pivis) and lead soldiers. Other boys, however, found a bundle of rods tied with a red ribbon... given to them by Satan (diàù), who had come to bring gifts to the naughty boys.

On the morning of 6 December, the boys sang the old adagio:

**“San Nicolò di Bari,  
La festa dei scolari.  
Se no faremo festa,  
Ghe tajarin la testa”.**

Instead, St Lucia dispensed gifts only to girls: on the evening of 12 December, the eve of the Saint, they would place a stocking in the window and the following morning would find it filled with every good thing. The older girls sang on those days:

**“Santa Lucia,  
Mamma mia,  
Porta i bomboni  
Nella calzetta mia.  
Ma se la mamma  
Non li mette,  
Resterà svode  
le calzette”.**

According to tradition, after 13 December, the days begin to get longer. An old Gorizia saying goes:

**“Di Santa Liissia  
fin Nedàl, Cres il di  
un pit di gial”.**

From Santa Lucia until Christmas, the day grows a cock's foot.

In the neighbourhood of San Rocco, during Epiphany, children walked the streets with a sack on their shoulders, singing the Song of the Shepherdess and the Song of the Three Kings (Ciansòn dai Re Màgios). Here is a verse of the latter:

**La so santa mari no veva,  
nè panussa, nè panusel,  
Par scialdá il so frut ta stala  
Jara un bó e un azinel.  
I namai cul fiat scialdavin  
Il paron dal sil e da tiara,  
Che di dodis ain piardut si jara  
E so mari lu serciava,  
Par ciatalu ca i dotors  
A sbuziaigi i soi errors.  
E chist jara Gesù bambin  
Pari nestri, prinsipi e fin.  
Siops! Siops! Siora parona!**

The holy mother had neither swaddling clothes nor bands to wrap her child in, and in the stable there was only an ox and a donkey to warm the master of heaven and earth with his breath.

At the age of twelve he had gone astray, and his mother, who had been searching for him, had found him sitting among the doctors, refuting their errors. This was the infant Jesus, our father, beginning and end! All the best! Greetings! Madam Mistress!

### THE BROADSWORD MASS

The one in Cividale is much more famous, but you will be surprised to discover that there was an even older tradition in Gorizia, linked to Christmas Eve. In our cathedral, on Christmas Eve, it was customary to announce the birth of Christ by brandishing a broadsword. A custom that some trace back to 1340, to an incident of war, when, in response to an assault by the Counts of Gorizia, the Patriarch of Aquileia **Bertrando di San Genesio** sacked Cormons and, on Christmas Eve, encamped in Gorizia. Due to the cold weather, the Patriarch had to abandon the siege of the castle but did not abandon his troops, celebrating Christmas Mass with them. It is said that during the service, Bertrando still wore full armour and sacred vestments over it. A canon read the Gospel of Matthew with unsheathed sword and then marked the rest of the warriors gathered there with it. Apparently, until the suppression of the Patriarchate of Aquileia, the patriarchs celebrated Christmas mass in armour and the blessing was given with the sword. Later, the ceremony was inherited by the Cathedral of Gorizia.

*“Taja il mond! murmured the people to themselves at that sublime act and made the sign of the cross with the deepest humility.”*

**Ricordi Goriziani, Anton Von Mailly, translation by Hans Kitzmüller, 1990, Editrice Goriziana**

### THE COMET OF BETHLEHEM: FROM GIOTTO TO MARUSSIG



Giovanni Maria Marussig, a clergyman, poet and polygraph from Gorizia (whom we also mentioned in the first issue) included a comet star in his drawings of Gorizia.

It was 1682 and the plague was raging in Gorizia. The comet has always been considered an omen (sometimes of misfortune, sometimes of good luck) and the star illustrated by the good Marussig is none other than Halley's comet.

Who was he? Edmond Halley (London, 8 November 1656 - Greenwich, 14 January 1742) was an English astronomer, mathematician, physicist, climatologist, geophysicist and meteorologist. The illustrious personage, who studied the comet that today bears his name, also stopped over in Gorizia, where he directed the work on strengthening the castle walls, building the 'new Bastion' and the wall extending towards the Castagnevizza.

Where have we seen this comet before? Above the Bethlehem hut, depicted in all its beauty by Giotto in the frescoes of the

Scrovegni Chapel in Padua. Presumably the painter had seen it during the passage of 1301.



### Siops! Siops! Siora parona!

It was an ancient Christmas greeting typical of Gorizia. It derives from the Roman augury *si opes*, where *si* means "it pleases heaven" and *opes* derives from *ops* "riches, faculties, possessions".

**When will we be able to see the comet again in the skies of Gorizia? Just in 2061!**

# Shop windows and food at Christmas

"In a shop window of confectioner Domenico Pordon, a few steps away from the Caffè Imperiale on Piazza Grande, towered in those days a large majolica vase, bearing the inscription 'Mostarda Soprafina', almost as if to remind the citizens of Gorizia of old gastronomic customs. The beautiful vessel came from the old Ieran Offelleria, which was located in Via del Rastello towards the end of the 18th century and later moved to Piazza Grande. Every family had a small bucket (mastelùt) of Gorizia mustard on the table at Christmas".

"Domenico Nardini's shop in Via del Rastello offered a riot of gastronomic delicacies, with sausages, pig's trotters, cheeses, olives and many other specialities to enrich Christmas tables".

**Gorizia d'altri tempi, Ranieri Mario Cossar, Edizioni Libreria Adamo, 1975**



Vase, Veneto (?) or Pietro Brautz manufacture, 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century, majolica, Musei Provinciali, Gorizia.

## The first of the year, Epiphany and hunters...

**The first of the year was an important day for shopkeepers.** Employees, customers and suppliers went to the shops to wish the shopkeepers a Happy New Year. Greeting cards decorated with flowers were exchanged (with flowers? at Christmas? eh yes... read more about that here!). This custom was also widespread in cafés. For example, at the Caffè Imperiale, patrons received a 'New Year's Diary and Newsletter' with staff greetings. The custom of exchanging greetings and small gifts in cafés on New Year's Eve dates back to at least 1828. At midday, when the shops closed, the procession of good wishes ended.

On New Year's Eve, families would gather. Grandparents would open the dances with *furlana* and *monferrina*, and at midnight they would exchange New Year's greetings with a toast of Terrano del Carso.

Craftsmen celebrated New Year's Eve in taverns. Here they received a plate of dried fruit as a gift and a dinner of traditional dishes, such as sour turnips with pig's feet or *bizis* (a mix of pickled vegetables). Red wine from Capriva was drunk and local stories and legends were told. **On 6 January, children** used to jump over the flames of the small bonfires lit for Epiphany, shouting: "Bread and wine the sausage in the basin!" In front of the doors of the inhabitants of Borgo San Rocco, the children of the farmers of the *Alla Bianca* locality would appear and go from house to house, carrying a sack on their shoulders, to sing the **Shepherdess and the Song of the Three Kings**. In return, they received the Christmas strenna, which consisted of a dish of pears, apples and walnuts, and in some houses even a small focaccia.

**Ranieri Mario Cossar tells:** "In the early dawn of the cold, early January day, as the stars were going out one by one in the turquoise sky, in front of the inn at the 'Stella d'oro' in Piazza Sant'Antonio..." (we invite you to look for the old sign. It still exists!). "... a two-horse carriage belonging to the coachman Grusovin used to stop. That was the meeting place of the Gorizian hunters. Around the appointed time, hunting dogs could be seen coming out of the quarters, first, then hunters wrapped in soft winter furs. As the shadows fell, the followers of Diana would return to the city with the game box on their shoulders, laden with delicious game. Around 8 p.m., they used to play tressetti at the 'Stella d'oro' with the cards of the caustic patriot Virginio Mengotti, who had his playing-card factory in Cocevia and then in Piazza San Rocco, and on the reverse side of which one could read, under grotesque caricatures, pasquinades with biting political allusions". Speaking of hunting... look at page 7 and find out what a stirrup cup is!

## The ancient tradition of Christmas cards!

The invention of the **first mass-produced postcard** is traced back to **December 1843**, when Sir Henry Cole commissioned John Calcott Horsley to produce an illustrated Christmas card, designed to be lithographed, coloured and sent in large quantities to family, friends and acquaintances. The idea was successful and, over the next few decades, improvements in the printing process made mass production of these cards much cheaper, spreading the **tradition of exchanging such cards**.



This fashion quickly spread to the rest of Europe (between the end of the 19th century and the end of World War I, Germany was the leading country in the production of Christmas cards) and to the United States.

During the Victorian era, Christmas cards depicting winter landscapes, family reunions, flowers (each flower has a specific meaning!), joyful children, fairies and animals such as mice, squirrels and robins were favoured. There was no shortage of satirical, amusing or allegorical images, sometimes disturbing for today's tastes but considered at the time as auspicious signs or parodies of specific superstitions. Examples include dead birds or a group of mice gathered around a banquet, ready to taste a Christmas roast (a big cat with potatoes). With time and changing consumer tastes, postcards began to appear with **religious subjects** (such as the Baby Jesus, the Holy Family, the Bethlehem Grotto and the Star of Bethlehem) and **"secular" themes** such as the Christmas tree, Father Christmas, presents, snow and other subjects placed in a Christmas context.



"Here are my warmest wishes for Christmas: I wish you good wine, good roast turkey, good mostarda, good mortadella, good mandarins and dried fruit". Correspondence postcard, hand-painted and sent to Trieste for Christmas 1914.

**I giorni del magico, edited by Gian Paolo Gri and Giuliana Valentini, Editrice Goriziana, 1985**

# Gorizian tradition: perfect recipes for the Christmas Season

The first two recipes are taken from a recipe book found in the convent of Sant'Orsola in Gorizia (*La cucina mitteleuropea delle madri orsoline di Gorizia*, edited by Lucia Pillon, LEG EDIZIONI, 2006). The author, Susanna Karl, was a student at the home economics school during the 1928-1929 school year. This notebook collects the recipes of a cookery course with traditional Central European and Italian dishes, such as tomato sauce and 'dry pasta', introduced in the wake of Fascist autarchic policies. The doses of the recipes, including those given here, are generous and designed for at least six people. Further variations of the last two recipes can be found in *I cibi tradizionali delle festività. Un anno di saperi e sapori* by Roberto Zottar. Those who wish to read more about traditional foods can consult the publication by scanning the qr code on page 3!

## FRITTELLINE

2 egg yolks, 70 g sugar, ½ kg flour, 3 egg whites, ¼ l milk

Blend 2 egg yolks, 60 g sugar, ¼ l milk, 400 g flour and a pinch of salt, then add the egg whites to the first mixture, stir lightly, then fry them in a suitable mould, in spoonfuls. When they have taken on a nice colour on one side, using a fork, drain them, sprinkle them with icing sugar and serve them with some fruit compote. If desired, spread them on one side with jam, cover with another, then serve them sprinkled with sugar.

## STRUDEL

Gr 500 flour, gr 170 butter, 1 egg, 1½ kg apples, gr 120 sugar, gr 400 bread, cinnamon, water

Make the dough with 200 g flour, ⅛ l warm water and 40 g [of butter]. Let the dough rest for ½ hour and then roll it out with your hands. The filling is prepared with breadcrumbs fried in butter, grated apples, sugar and cinnamon. Everything is spread over the dough, rolled into a cylinder shape and placed in the mould, where it is baked for about ½ hour.

## BRODO BRUSTOLÀ/BRUT BRUSTOLÂT - PREÆGANKA

2 tablespoons cooked butter, 2 tablespoons flour, 1 teaspoon caraway (kümmel), 1 litre water, salt

Fry the flour in 3 or 4 tablespoons of cooked butter (clarified butter in the old recipe, but fresh butter in a current one) until the flour takes on a brown colour. Kümmel (*carum carvi*) seeds are added and boiling salted water is added in such a quantity as to have a clear broth. It is cooked for half an hour and served with squares of stale bread browned in butter. There is a variant with fennel seeds instead of caraway seeds.

## REPA O BROVADA

In Gorizia, repa (finely chopped turnips, left to infuse with marc, which will characterise the infusion depending on whether they are white or red) is cooked by sautéing garlic in oil, preferably in an earthenware pot. In the Central European tradition, kumino, smoked bacon or sausages are added, with a long slow cooking time.



A photo of the junction between Via Rastello and Via delle Monache. One glimpses the 'Farmacia ai Due Mori', today the garrison of Via del Borgo.



**A BOOKMARK FOR YOU! YOU CAN CUT IT!**



# Four Gorizian manufactures

Many of us will be buying handicraft objects to give as Christmas presents. We would like to tell you about four (perhaps) lesser-known ancient Gorizian handicrafts: PEWTER, CERAMICS, GLASS AND GAME CARDS.



## PEWTER

Tin working has been an important craft activity in Gorizia with roots that are lost in time. This activity may even date back to the period of the Sovereign Counts, although the first specific mention of a Gorizian pewter-maker, Andrea Planiscig, dates back to the 17th century. Tin, prized for its resemblance to silver and resistance to atmospheric agents, was widely used in the production of various objects. The diffusion of pewter artefacts in Gorizia is evidenced by documents from the 18th and 19th centuries that list tin "tondi", "piatti", "salarini" and "cuchiarij". The production of pewter objects involved the use of casting moulds. Forms for everyday objects were made of sand or plaster, while stone, copper or brass were used for artistic pieces. From the 19th century, the art of pewter casting in Gorizia began a slow decline, due to the advent of new materials.

Artistic pieces became collectors' items, while those in common use were gradually replaced. The First World War was a hard blow for pewter craftsmanship, with the requisitioning of objects for the production of war material.

Pewter masters active in Gorizia: Andrea Planiscig (17th century): first documented pewter-maker from Gorizia. Antonio Prini (18th century): active in Gorizia in 1767. **His trademark depicted a double-headed eagle surmounted by the imperial crown and the initials A.P. His workshop was located in Via Rastello.** Marino Naida (18th century): active in Gorizia in 1767. Filippo Perino (18th century): active in Gorizia from 1788 to 1807.



Would you like to learn more? Would you like to learn more about the history of Gorizia's handicrafts?

Here are some titles:

**Storia dell'arte e dell'artigianato in Gorizia,**

Ranieri Mario Cossar, Del Bianco Editore, 1948

**Gorizia. Museo della Moda e delle Arti Applicate,**

a cura di Raffaella Sgubin, Editoriale Lloyd, Trieste, 2005

**Raccolta di ceramiche settecentesche dei Musei Provinciali di Gorizia,** di Maddalena Malni Pascoletti.

## CERAMICS

Gorizia in the 18th century was a vibrant centre of craft activities, as evidenced by the numerous guilds that regulated the production of glass, silk, wood and metal.

Like all border towns, it was a crossroads of cultures and influences, and sources document trade with Carinthia, for example for glass and the import of hats from Germany.

It is plausible that ceramics, a commonly used material, was also traded and craftsmen from other territories brought new techniques and styles to Gorizia.

In the 18th century, there were two factories active in Gorizia, the majolica factory of **Pietro Brautz (or Braus)** located in Salcano (the "Mostarda soprafinia" vase is probably his) and that of **Marco Foglietti** in Borgo Italia. Marinated eel from Marano lagunare was served on its flowered plates during Christmas lunches.



## GLASS

The glass industry in Gorizia was born and developed in the 18th century, assuming an important role in the local economy. **The first glassworks was founded in Tribussa in 1722 by glassmakers from Hamburg,** specialised in the production of black glass bottles, mainly used for the export of wine to Spain and later to the Indies. The choice of Tribussa was not accidental, but dictated by the availability of timber and the excellent quality of the local sand, which were essential elements for glassmaking.

**In 1771, the glassworks was moved to Valfredda.** Glass production in Gorizia was known for its high quality and variety of products. In addition to bottles, articles for pharmaceutical use were produced, such as phials, ampoules, vases and containers for **teriaca, a panacea for every ailment (which we will discuss in future issues),** and objects for domestic use, including cups, jugs, trays and glasses. In addition, fine decorative items such as glass figurines, corrugated and filigreed glass were created.

Production also included crystal, window panes and mirrors, the result of advanced experimentation. A strong impulse to the Gorizian glass industry came from the growing demand for bottles from the Trieste rosolio factories.

**A curious aspect of the history of glass in Gorizia is the link between the glass industry and two historical streets in Gorizia: Cocèvia, which leads from Via Rastello to the Castle Hill, and Coceviutta, a small alley that no longer exists.** These names are linked to the *gocchèveri*, itinerant merchants from Gottschee and the surrounding area who had their workshops and warehouses in this very street. Known for selling sheets of glass decorated with sacred images - this suggests a strong connection with the religious market, particularly with regard to the decoration of sacred buildings -, their trade transcended local borders, reaching as far as Istria and Dalmatia, thus playing a crucial role in the distribution of glassware products.

This toponymic evidence, which can also be found in the Trieste district of Cocèvia, is a sign of the importance that the *gocchèveri* had in the distribution of glass products, particularly decorated glass panes.

1. Chocolate bowl, unidentified workshop, 18th century last quarter, pewter, Musei Provinciali di Gorizia
2. Glass, Gorizia glassworks, 1771/ 1794, glass, Musei Provinciali di Gorizia
3. Bottle, Gorizia glassworks, 18th century, glass, Musei Provinciali, Gorizia
4. Serving dish, Gorizia manufactory, 18th century, majolica, Musei Provinciali, Gorizia
5. Plate, Pietro Brautz, manufactory, 18th century, majolica, Musei Provinciali di Gorizia

**A BOOKMARK FOR YOU! YOU CAN CUT IT!**

Sei + 1  
cose da fare  
a Natale a Gorizia



1. perdersi lungo le vie  
del Borgo Storico  
scoprendo nuovi  
dettagli mai notati

2. salire in castello e  
ammirare la città  
vestita a festa

3. mangiare una frittella  
alla fiera di Sant'Andrea

4. acquistare i regali  
nei negozi della città

5. regalare ai tuoi amici  
i biglietti per visitare i  
musei e le mostre  
di Gorizia!

6. rilassarsi in compagnia  
davanti ad un buon  
bicchiere di brulè!

+ 1

Essere felice,  
è Natale!



## PLAYING CARDS

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a playing card factory in Gorizia, owned by Virginio Mengotti son of Bartolomeo (formerly a card manufacturer), located first in Cocevia and then in Piazza San Rocco. Mengotti's cards were used to play tressette at the Stella d'Oro inn, which we have mentioned in the previous pages. On the back of Virginio Mengotti's cards, beneath grotesque caricatures, were written pasquinades with biting political allusions that were often the subject of discussion among the townspeople. From the same family and profession we find the more famous **Ariodante**. Virginio's brother, Ariodante was born in Trieste on 8 February 1840. After his father's death in 1862, he continued not only to produce the coveted decks of playing cards, embossed with the initials AM, but also to produce them in the family tradition, with satirical, polemical or simply humorous epigrams. **During the First World War, Ariodante sold the company to Modiano, which is still active in Trieste today: the historical Mengotti graphics are still recognisable on the decks of "triestine" cards for the game of briscola.**



A card by Virginio Mengotti



A card by Ariodante Mengotti

For further reading:  
*Storia dell'arte e dell'artigianato in Gorizia*,  
Ranieri Mario Cossar, Del Bianco Editore, 1948



## The "Little museum of workshops" in via Rastello

There is a new sign on Via Rastello that introduces you to a very interesting place. It is the **Piccolo Museo di Botteghe**, the **Wunderkammer** of Beniamino Lo Re, whom everyone calls Mimo. Mr Mimo comes from a family of craftsmen: his father had been a shoemaker, his brother Gigi had started out as a barber and he himself worked as an upholsterer, even occasionally emptying cellars and attics. This is how, over time, he came into possession of **wonderful, curious and precious objects** that testify to a Gorizia that perhaps no longer exists today. **These are the trades of yesteryear!** Upon entering the small museum, one is catapulted as if into an alley filled with workshops that seem to be alive, animated even though there are no people working on those counters or inviting the patron to buy something. They are, apparently, just objects, but their abundance and layout **arouse great fascination and curiosity**. Curiosity that Mimo Lo Re is more than happy to satisfy with tales about each of his treasures, which are so dear to him.



Initially, he started selling these objects of his at antique markets, but later, discovering that he was particularly fond of some of them, he decided to stop and started keeping them. Thus the idea of this small museum was born.

Welcomed by the kindness and helpfulness of its curator, you will have the opportunity to observe **objects that we no longer recognise** and to immerse yourself in the atmosphere of the workshops of yesteryear: the shoemaker, the blacksmith, the tavern, the knife-grinder... that's it!

It is precisely the knife-grinder that suggests a particular link between Lo Re and Stolizza, a village in the Resia Valley that you might ask him about when you visit his museum.

We can only recommend that you visit the *Piccolo Museo di Botteghe*, but beware: **one visit will not be enough!** Each time you return, you will notice something that you had not considered the time before. A tool you had never seen, a new detail, a new story.



### THE STIRRUP GLASS

In the Small Museum you can see the **stirrup glasses**. What are they?

Their name comes from an expression meaning the last glass drunk before taking leave. The origin of the term dates back to the time when people mainly rode horses: the 'stirrup glass' was the one consumed before climbing into the saddle and leaving.

What, however, is the link with hunting? The hunters, having climbed into the saddle and ready for the hunt, were offered the auspicious cup and, in a sort of ritual, the glasses often had the shape of prey: wild boar, deer, foxes, or the image of hounds following the hunters.



# Christmas All of a Sudden

Christmas 2020, via Rastello -

It all begins with the smell of fritters, even on via Rastello, in fact, in the new via Rastello. Sometimes unexpected ingredients, the ones that make up a magical potion, and surely none of us could have predicted that one of the magical ingredients that in 2020 would spark the most bottom-up regeneration you could imagine would be time. **That rarefied and unprecedented time**, unimaginable before, a world revolution, to which we would be forced by the pandemic tsunami. Yet, we managed to turn it into an opportunity: citizens (mainly women, to be honest...) of via Rastello, both residents and non-residents, in love with its silent beauty, rolled up their sleeves to remove the dust from the shop windows and literally and figuratively rekindle those spaces that we felt still had so much to say! It was almost Christmas, and like the Three Kings, we set out in search of all the owners of the vacant shops. We earned their trust, took charge of the keys to the lowered shutters. From that moment on, it was all about cleaning, going up and down, opening, closing, reopening. Satin ribbons and screwdrivers. Safety pins and silicone guns. Pallets and chiffon. Chips, rust, velvet. The first new Christmas of via Rastello was truly special: that precious time of the pandemic allowed us to transform every shop window, door, column, and store into a Christmas corner, a magical village. In the empty windows, we set up a nativity scene exhibition, many pieces lent spontaneously by Gorizians who had noticed us: to give light – the electric systems were naturally no longer connected – three times a day, volunteers from the group took turns



replacing all the dead wireless lightbulbs, which a local shop had lent us. But with an acceleration that still moves us, the whole city soon noticed the new vitality of via Rastello! The children's drawings arrived, many of them, the handmade decorations inherited from grandmothers or made by volunteers called together via social media, and evergreen boughs from the gardens: **a true community path.**

We realized that to provoke all that affection behind the shops, there had to be much, much more. That's when the desire began to scratch beneath the chipped frame in search of the deep identity of via Rastello, its traditions, its story: and we stumbled upon the Mastelùt, a revelation! Spicy flavors, family traditions, trade, craftsmanship: all evoked by a single object, a container object! Since 2020, the Christmas program of via Rastello has thus become "Il Mastelùt," and with each spoonful of that *exquisite mustard*, our via Rastello became a new physical space, and a space of the soul, both ancient and contemporary. Then came the "Borghi" Grant: the tool to transform our desires into stable regeneration,

the lively exchanges that each new installation sparked into resident projects, to transform our street into the new heart of all Gorizia, and beyond!

I had chosen a little red crossbody bag in 2020, to carefully guard the keys to the shops entrusted to me: because they were enchanted keys, that didn't just open vacant stores, but each time opened **new chapters, new projects, new experiences to do together!** Today, the red crossbody is almost empty, and the Association Via Rastello, founded by those women in love with the street and what it had always been able to transmit to so many of us, is proud, optimistic, determined. Happy. Via Rastello Association is happy today. Mission accomplished.

**CHIARA CANZONERI**  
President of  
the Via Rastello  
Association



## Sincerely, Merry Christmas

The anticipation that makes hearts race, the warm glow of festively adorned shop windows, the joy of sharing precious moments with those who matter most – this is how we embrace the magic of Christmas at La Via del BorGO.

**We've woven these feelings into a story, a journey that unfolds day by day, guiding us into the most enchanting time of the year.** Our special Advent Calendar reveals a piece of history each day, inviting you to claim it as your own.

This Christmas, our heartfelt wish is simple: may our passion for telling the story of Gorizia and its charming Borgo inspire you. We hope you'll join us in this collective storytelling, creating an atmosphere so captivating that it compels every visitor to exclaim, "*What a delightful December Gorizia offers, both in the past and today!*"

**Sincerely, Merry Christmas!**



DISCOVER  
THE STORY  
EVERY DAY

CONFCOMMERCIO GORIZIA



Via Rastello, 52 | Gorizia  
+39 334 750 5642  
@laviadelborgo\_  
info@laviadelborgo.eu  
www.laviadelborgo.eu

### EDITED BY:

CATERINA TROVATO  
ANGELICA STASI  
LODOVICA GAIA STASI  
VALENTINA RANDAZZO

### IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

- FAIRS AND MARKETS OF THE PAST
- CHRONICLES OF VIA RASTELLO
- THE HIDDEN DETAILS OF OUR BORGO

**TUCK YOUR NEWSPAPER UNDER YOUR ARM, SNAP A PHOTO AND TAG US!**  
**#LAVIADELBORGO**  
**#VIARASTELLO**  
**#GORIZIA**



Nell'ambito di "MILLE ANNI DI STORIA AL CENTRO DELL'EUROPA: BORGO CASTELLO CROCEVIA DI POPOLI E DI CULTURE", finanziamento PNRR - Next Generation EU, per il progetto pilota PNRR M1C3 Misura 2 Investimento 2.1 linea A – CUP F88F2200000007