

When the going gets tough, Italians get eating

New generation is discovering the recipes of austerity

[Michael Goldfarb](#) February 15, 2012 11:13



Thanks to The Guardian's Rome correspondent [Tom Kington](#) for providing the highlights of an article in La Repubblica about Italians' changing eating habits.

Apparently, Italians are rediscovering the hard-times recipes of their great grandparents as the country re-enters recession and money is tight.

The article contains some nifty recipes for stewed horse shoulder and pig's lung soup.

We're talking very cheap cuts of meat here.

It also includes the inevitable quote from Carlo Petrini, head of the slow food movement.

"Old recipes are a richness that Italy boasts, that were perfected during periods of poverty and are a way to come through the crisis eating well."

Offal, stale bread and left-over pulses are the main ingredients in most of the dishes. No mention of spaghetti carbonara though.

I know a couple of theories as to how this dish was invented and both relate to times of scarcity. First, the one most people know, is that it was invented in Rome shortly after the Allies took the city from the Nazis at the end of the war. The Italians had pasta, American GI's had bacon and egg rations, fraternization led to culinary mingling and hence carbonara.

The other story - more heroic - is that partisans living off the land in the Appenines during the war were able to obtain eggs and bacon from local peasants. They boiled water on a small charcoal brazier called a carbonara and mixed the whole dish in a single pot, so they could move fast if they had to.