

Piacenza cured meats through the ages

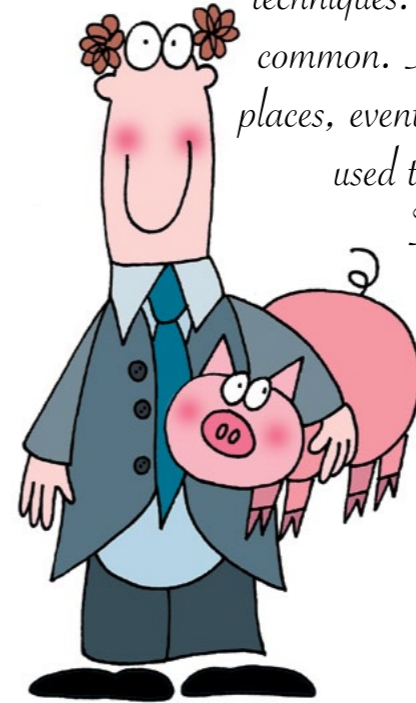


I think it is important to remind our children of the rich history and excellent traditional products of our province. Among such products, PDO cured meats have pride of place. A knowledge of the history and characteristics of these cured meats will also be of great help to teachers in lessons on nutrition. They will be able to teach their students about how these tasty cured meats are produced in a healthy, safe and environmentally-friendly way. The hard work and skill of local producers have ensured that the characteristics of our world famous traditional products have remained unchanged. Teaching this to the next generation will foster a spirit of pride in their province and enable them to share our cultural heritage.

*The President of the Consortium of DOP Cured Meats Producers
of Piacenza
Antonio Grossetti*

THE HISTORY OF CURED MEATS FROM PIACENZA

The need to preserve meat led men to experiment with various techniques. Salting was, and still is, one of the most common. It was developed over time and in various places, eventually becoming the methods that are now used to produce traditional cured meats.



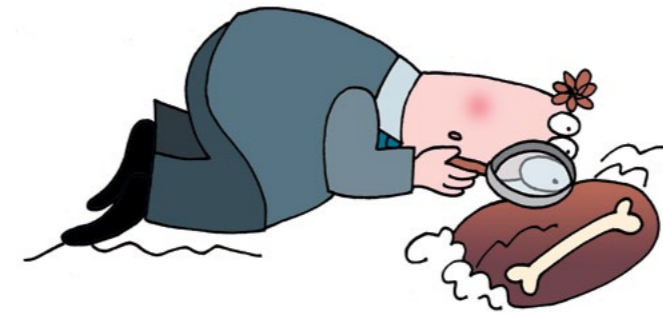
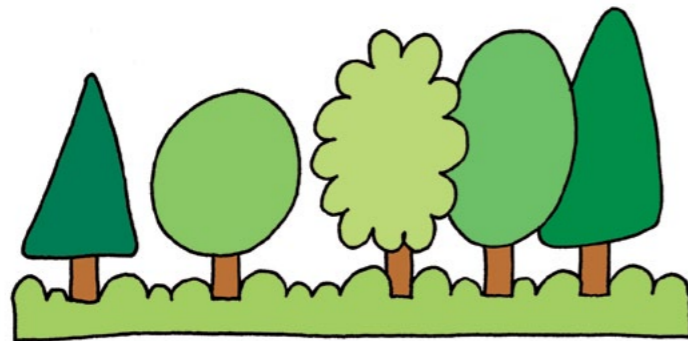
The meat that was best suited to salting was pork. Pigs originated in Hungary and spread to the rest of Europe wandering through the large oak forests that covered the land in ancient times.

*P*roof of this can be found...

...in the cave of Altamira in Spain, where cave paintings of wild boar dating from 10,000 B.C. have been found.

In Hacilar in Turkey a small terracotta statue of a pig from 5600 B.C. was discovered. Historians believe that pig-breeding is a sign that people in the area had gone from living as nomads to being sedentary.

One of the oldest depictions of a pig can be seen on a stele dating from 5000 B.C. found in Val Camonica. The pig is surrounded by flocks of sheep and magical symbols.

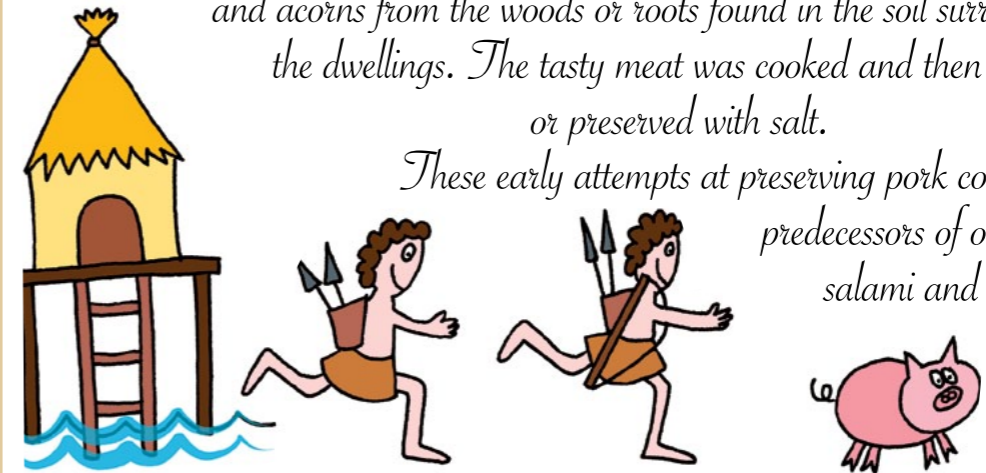


*T*he first objects made from pigs bones date from the time of the stilt houses of the Terramare culture in the Piacenza and Parma area of the Po Valley. From this,

it can be deduced that these primitive cultures already enjoyed eating pork and its succulent fat.

*I*n 1,000 B.C. pork was an important part of the diet of the ancient inhabitants of the Po Valley. This humble animal was fed on chestnuts and acorns from the woods or roots found in the soil surrounding the dwellings. The tasty meat was cooked and then eaten or preserved with salt.

These early attempts at preserving pork could be the predecessors of our coppa, salami and pancetta!



The Etruscans, who were refined country folk and gourmets, appreciated the pleasures of the hunt as well the pleasures of the table. They were surely the inventors of the pork-roasting oven. Pliny relates how every year 20,000 pigs were sent from the region of Etruria to Rome for slaughter. Statues of wild boars are often found in Etruscan tombs, possibly to commemorate successful hunting expeditions. In 500 B.C. some coins featuring pigs were minted in Populonia.



During the Roman period, Hannibal crossed what was known as Gallia Cisalpina (the northern part of the Po Valley) and won a great victory against the Romans at the Battle of the Trebbia in 218 B.C. It is said that he celebrated his victory by eating salted wild boar meat of the Boii Gauls.

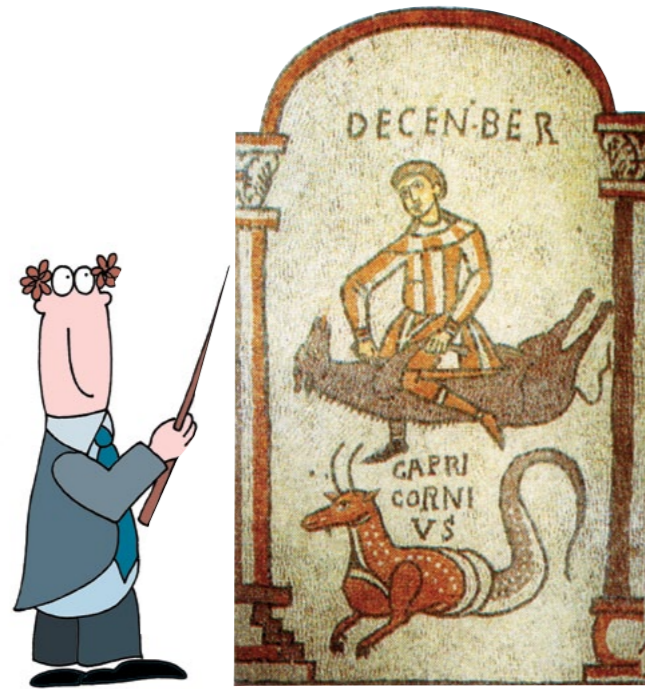


A Roman amulet or pendant in the shape of a small pig was found in the province of Piacenza. It is currently in the town museum. This find confirms that the pig was considered a noble animal, with an important economic and social role.



(town museum in Palazzo Farnese)

During the Middle Ages, the earliest documents regarding the trading of meat date back to the 14th century. In these documents there is mention of a Guild of Cheesemongers and Cured Meat Traders which had its headquarters in Piacenza's Piazza Duomo. There are even some mosaics in the churches of Saint Savino in Piacenza and Saint Columbanus in Bobbio that show agricultural scenes which include pig keeping.



The true ambassador for cured meats from Piacenza in the 1700s was Cardinal Giulio Alberoni, the great diplomat and prime minister of the Spanish king. On more than one occasion, he used gifts of fine cured meats from Piacenza to help create ties with the most influential people of the time. These connections helped him further his international political career.



With the help of these cured meats, which he called "simple trifles of no real cost", he managed to form important alliances. One such example is when he convinced the Duke of Vendôme, a French general, to work for the Spanish crown. Elisabetta Farnese, the wife of Philip V of Spain, was an enthusiastic admirer of the land of her birth. She often had large quantities of cured meat sent to her in wooden crates filled with ash, which helped to preserve these superb products during their long journey.

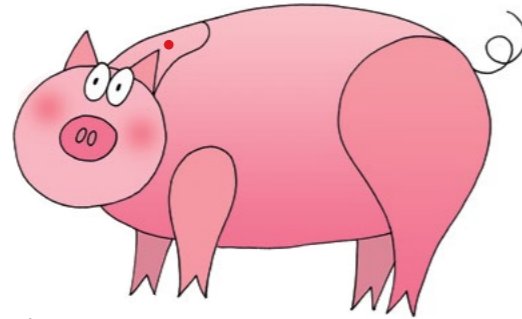


IDENTITY CARD

PDO Coppa Piacentina



NAME: Coppa
SURNAME: Piacentina
APPELLATION: PDO
NATIONALITY: Italian
AGE: Six months
COLOUR: Red with white streaks
WEIGHT: at least 1,5kg
HEIGHT: 30/40cm
DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: mild and tender
PDO STATUS GIVEN BY: European Union



Signed by
the official of the Consortium of PDO Cured Meats
Producers of Piacenza



PDO Coppa Piacentina

PDO Coppa Piacentina is made from the pig's neck muscles. Two whole coppas can be made from each pig. The pigs used for the production of coppa come from the regions of Emilia Romagna and Lombardy, while the meat must be processed in the province of Piacenza. The climate and area of production guarantee that unmistakable flavour that has made this coppa famous throughout history.

There are four main phases in the production of coppa:

- In the first phase a carefully prepared mixture of salt and spices is sprinkled on the meat;*
 - After a period of cooling, the meat is rubbed and wrapped in pig membranes;*
 - The coppa is then tied and left to dry in ventilated kilns for 10-15 days;*
 - Finally, the coppa is left to mature for at least six months.*
- The finished product is cylindrical and over 1.5Kg in weight.*

PDO Coppa Piacentina must be sold with the proper PDO label, which guarantees the origin of the meat and the traditional methods used in its productions.

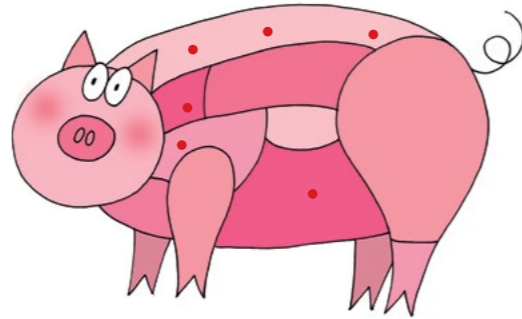


IDENTITY CARD

PDO Salame Piacentino



NAME: Salame
SURNAME: Piacentino
APPELLATION: PDO
NATIONALITY: Italian
AGE: At least 45 days
COLOUR: Bright red with round patches of pink fat
WEIGHT: 400-1000g
HEIGHT: 30/40cm
DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: Mild and tasty
PDO STATUS GIVEN BY: European Union



Signed by
the official of the Consortium of PDO Cured Meats
Producers of Piacenza



PDO Salame Piacentino

PDO Salame Piacentino is made only with pig meat and fat. While the meat comes from pigs bred in the regions of Emilia-Romagna and Lombardy, it is processed only in the province of Piacenza, where, as we have learned, it has been made for centuries.

The production is divided into four phases:

- The lean and fatty parts are coarsely minced and mixed together, as tradition demands;*
- Carefully measured quantities of wine, salt and spices are added to the mixture;*
- The meat is forced into a piece of pig's intestine, tied and left to dry in a kiln for about a week;*
- It is then left to mature for at least 45 days.*

The finished product is cylindrical, weighs from 400g to 1Kg, and has compact slices.

PDO Salame Piacentino must be sold with the proper PDO label, which guarantees both the provenance of the meat and the traditional techniques used in its production.

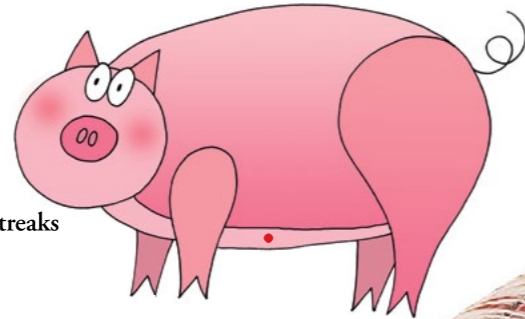


IDENTITY CARD

PDO Pancetta Piacentina



NAME: Pancetta
SURNAME: Piacentina
APPELLATION: PDO
NATIONALITY: Italian
AGE: 3 months
COLOUR: Red with pink and white streaks
WEIGHT: 4 - 8 kg
HEIGHT: 50/60cm
DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: Mild, melts in the mouth
PDO STATUS GIVEN BY: European Union



Signed by
the official of the Consortium of PDO Cured Meats
Producers of Piacenza



PDO Pancetta Piacentina

PDO Pancetta Piacentina is made with the fat belly of the pig (known as pancettone).

The meat can only come from pigs bred in the regions of Emilia-Romagna and Lombardy but the pancetta can only be made in the province of Piacenza, as the climate is an important factor in determining the characteristics of this succulent cured meat.

The production is divided into four phases:

- Initially, the meat is sprinkled with a mixture of salt and spices, made following a traditional recipe;*
 - Then it is cooled and stored, so the salt and spices can be absorbed uniformly;*
 - After being rubbed, the pancetta is rolled up, tied and left to dry in kilns for 10 to 15 days;*
 - Once the pancetta is dry, it is left to mature for at least 3 months.*
- The finished product is cylindrical, and weighs between 4kg and 8kg.*

PDO Pancetta Piacentina must be sold with the proper PDO label, which guarantees both the provenance of the meat and the traditional techniques used in its production.



COLOURS, AROMAS AND FLAVOURS

PDO Coppa Piacentina



The cut slice is compact and uniform, ruby red in colour, with pink fatty parts. It has a delicate aroma of matured meat, with spicy, particularly peppery, notes. The flavour is marked by its mildness, which contrasts with a delicate savoury flavour and the characteristic aroma of matured products.

PDO Salame Piacentino



The pink pieces of fat, which are typical of this coarsely ground salami, are clearly separate from the ruby red lean meat.

The aroma is defined by the delicate smell of matured meat, with a touch of spice. The texture is tender but compact, with a mild yet savoury flavour, with a slight tang of matured meat.

PDO Pancetta Piacentina



The cut slice is characterised by alternate layers of bright red and pink.

The aroma is delicate, but with some pleasant spicy notes.

The tender slice melts in the mouth thanks to the fat content. It is the fat that defines its delicate, mild flavour, with a savoury note that makes this type of cured meat particularly appetising.



The Role of the Consortium of Cured Meat Producers of Piacenza

The main roles of the Consortium are checking that the rules governing the production of cured meats are followed and that no-one outside the consortium uses the protected designations "PDO Coppa Piacentina", "PDO Salame Piacentino" and "PDO Pancetta Piacentina". It also protects, promotes and advertises the cured meats from Piacenza.

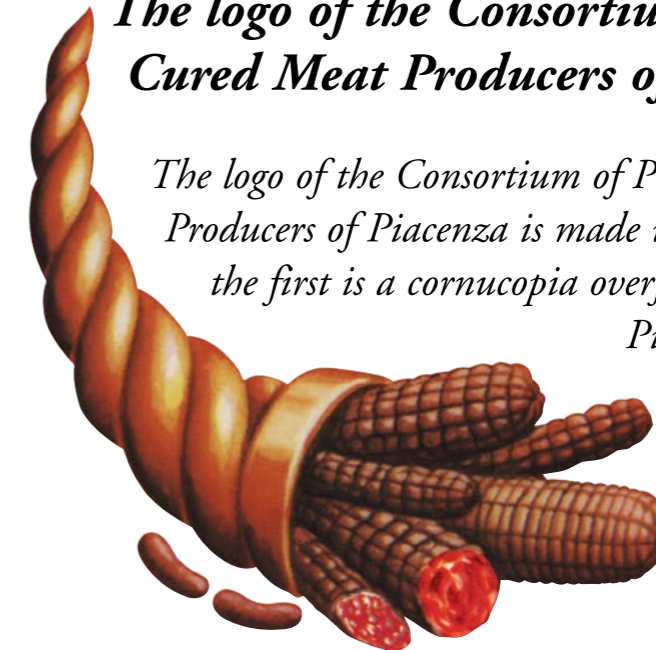
How to recognise PDO cured meats from Piacenza

PDO cured meats from Piacenza can be recognized by the PDO label and the logo of the consortium on the band around them.



The logo of the Consortium of PDO Cured Meat Producers of Piacenza

The logo of the Consortium of PDO Cured Meat Producers of Piacenza is made up of two symbols: the first is a cornucopia overflowing with Piacenza's PDO cured meat.



The second is the coat of arms of Cardinal Giulio Alberoni's family. The Cardinal was a great lover of cured meat and an ambassador for the specialities from Piacenza.



The Consortium decided to use this symbol to remember the great contributions of this important figure in the history of cured meats from Piacenza. The logo is encircled by red, white and green bands which recall Piacenza's colours as well as those of the Italian flag.



PDO Point (Punto DOP)

This logo marks the places where you can buy and taste PDO cured meat from Piacenza. These are areas dedicated to the promotion of PDO cured meat from Piacenza.



During the "PDO Point" event snacks and tasters of PDO cured meat from Piacenza will be given out.

THE PDO LOGO

What is PDO?

PDO is the highest EU recognition for food.

Who assigns PDO status?

A specialised board set up by the European Union

What does PDO mean?

Protected Designation of Origin: the product is made according to strict and very ancient rules exclusively in a specific area.

PDO Cured Meat from Piacenza

The European Commission gave Coppa Piacentina, Salame Piacentino and Pancetta Piacentina PDO status on 2 July 1996. The province of Piacenza is the only area in the EU to have three types of PDO cured meat.

The Protected Designation of Origin Label

Given by the European Union to food and wine of recognised excellence.



JOKES



*How do you take a sick pig to the hospital?
In an hambulance!*

*Where do pigs park their cars?
In a porking lot!*

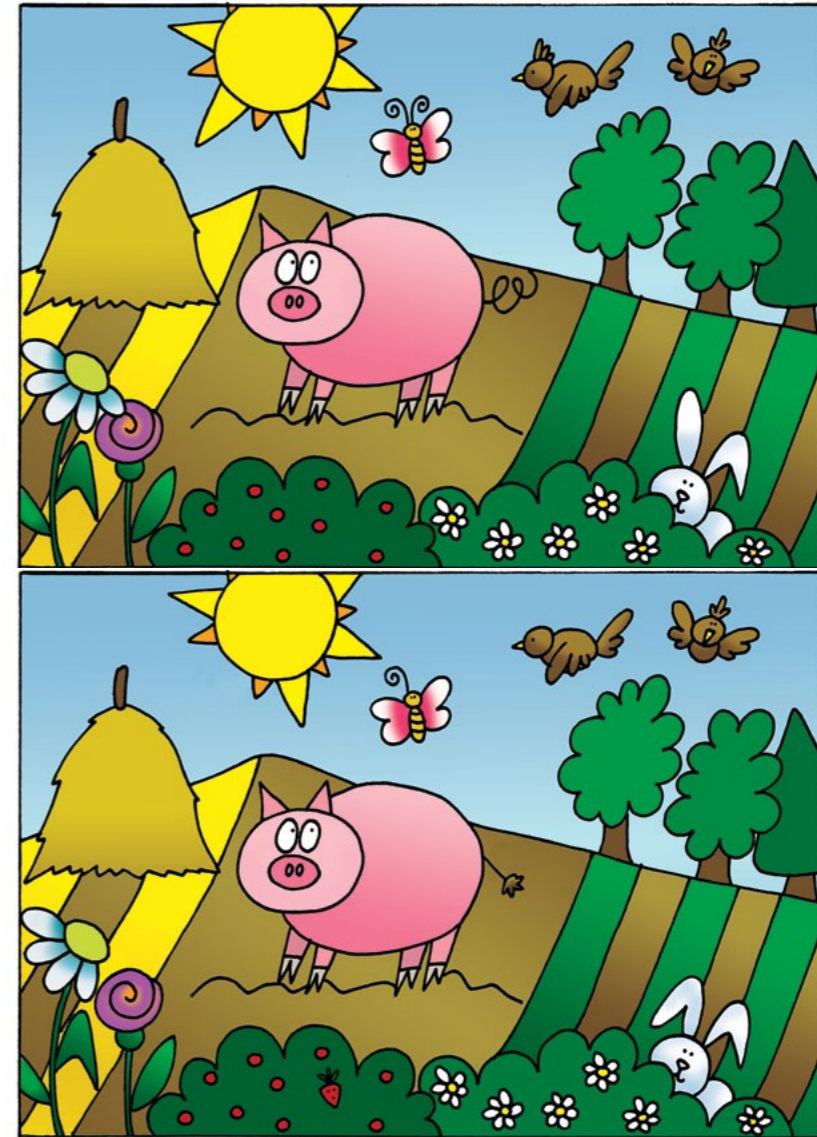
*How do pigs share top secret messages?
With invisible oink!*

*What do you call a pig thief?
A hamburgler!*

*Did you hear about the pig who couldn't tie his own shoe laces?
He was too ham fisted.*

*What do you call a pig with skin problems?
A warthog!*

Spot the 7 differences....



Spot the 7 differences....

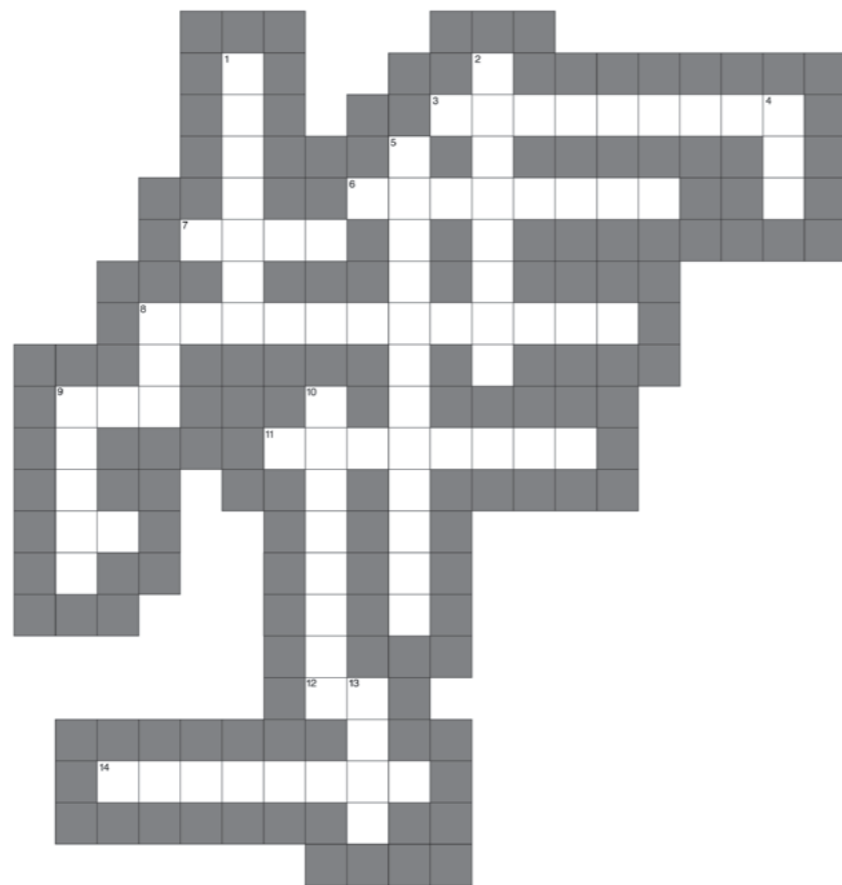
Crossword

Across:

- 3 - Herbs
- 6 - The only province with three PDO products
- 7 - An ingredient in salami from Piacenza
- 8 - Natural covering of salami from Piacenza
- 9 - How many symbols are there in the Consortium's logo?
- 11 - How is salami from Piacenza minced?
- 12 - There are two of them in coppa
- 14 - A Cardinal who was a lover of cured meat from Piacenza

Down:

- 1 - A technique for preserving meat
- 2 - Fatty cut of pork
- 4 - How many months is pancetta left to mature?
- 5 - Natural covering for coppa from Piacenza
- 10 - What is done to pancetta after salting?
- 13 - The colour of the fat in pancetta



Check your answers



Food Insults.....

- *Mangi come un maiale!* ("You eat like a pig!")
- *Sei un maiale!* ("You are a pig!", meaning a messy person)
- *Sei un salame!* ("You are a salami!", meaning clumsy)
- *Coda di serpente non mi hai fatto niente, coda di maiale non mi hai fatto male!* ("Snake's tail, you haven't even touched me, pig's tail you haven't hurt me!", a nursery rhyme)
- *Non fare i tuoi porci comodi!* ("Don't do whatever you like!")
- *Che pancetta che hai!* ("You are a bit fat!")

Proverbs and sayings...

- *Chi si sposa è contento un giorno, chi uccide il maiale è contento per un anno!* (If you marry you'll be happy for a day, if you kill a pig you'll be happy for a year!)
- *Il maiale è un salvadanaio* (A pig is a moneybox)
- *Casa con molti maiali, casa da signori* (A house with lots of pigs is a lordly house)
- *Il maiale ingrassa nello sporco* (A pig gets fat in the dirt)
- *Morto il maiale si spartiscono i salami* (Once the pig is dead you share out the salami)
- *Il maiale è il bue del contadino povero* (The pig is the poor farmer's ox, his most useful animal)



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