

## ***Risotto, spaghetti, vino: Ingredients for a Good Gastronomic Dictionary***

Elisa Corino  
Università di Torino

*Gastronomy is commonly recognized as a basic “ingredient” of culture and tradition. As a central axis of various cultural components, food is a common denominator connecting both the Fine Arts and Science, as well as History, Anthropology, Sociology, etc. Additionally, gastronomy has become one of the world’s most important professions and continues its ascent. Italy has recently witnessed this growth as being the origin of the Slow Food movement and the hosting of the first University of Gastronomic Sciences, where specific lecture courses expressly focus on culinary jargon and on the linguistic, typological and historical analysis of menus, recipe books and recipes alike. The increasing need for thorough glossaries and dictionaries devoted to detailed studies of the subject is apparent. This paper is meant to deal with the vocabulary connected to food in its broad sense, and will attempt to provide a cross section of the lexicographical state of the art and propose a possible original source to be held up as a model for gastronomy dictionaries: Newsgroup corpora on cooking. The Langenscheidt Praxiswörterbuch Gastronomie Italienisch (2005) will be investigated as an example of an exhaustive dictionary: its word list compared with the 500 most frequent occurrences of nouns, adjectives and verbs in the NUNC-cooking (Newsgroup UseNet Corpora), amongst both its Italian and German versions. Finally, a case study on adjectives describing wine is presented to suggest new entries for a wine glossary.*

### **1. Introduction**

Gastronomy is commonly recognized as a basic “ingredient” of culture and tradition. As central axis of various cultural components, food is a common denominator connecting both the Fine Arts and Science, as well as history, anthropology, sociology...

What is more gastronomy has become one of the world leading professions of these days, and it is on the rise. Italy has recently eyewitnessed this growth being the cradle of the Slow Food movement and hosting the first University of Gastronomic Sciences, where specific lecture courses expressly focus on culinary jargon and on the linguistic, typological and historical analysis of menus, recipe books and recipes alike.

The increasing need for thorough glossaries and dictionaries devoted to detailed studies of the subject is then obvious.

There do exist indeed some good lexicographic resources, but they are generally given up to a specific theme, such as wine, or they are intended to serve a very handy function, being therefore limited both in their headwords and in the content of their articles.

This paper is meant to deal with the vocabulary connected to food in its broad sense, trying to give a cross section of the lexicographical state of the art and proposing a possible original source to be held up as a model for gastronomy dictionaries: Newsgroup corpora on cooking.

The *Langenscheidt Praxiswörterbuch Gastronomie Italienisch* (2005) is going to be investigated as positive example of a quite exhaustive dictionary, its word list is thus compared with the 500 most frequent occurrences of nouns, adjectives and verbs in the NUNC-cooking (Newsgroup UseNet Corpora), as for both its Italian and German versions.

## 2. The NUNC corpus as a source

NUNC (Newsgroup UseNet Corpora) is a suite of corpora built at the University of Turin<sup>1</sup> with the aim of investigating particular textual varieties<sup>2</sup>, which enables researches to support lexical and terminological studies as well. Besides the general corpus, NUNC offers subcorpora which have been devoted to very precise fields, in order to consider the peculiar features of the language of Motors, Photography and Cooking. People discussing such subjects use a quite specialised vocabulary, though they may not necessarily be “professionals” and they have different levels of expertise. Nonetheless users share a common background and they all are familiar with specific terms and phrases in the field, forming therefore a sort of community based not only on the same interests but also on a commonly shared LSP.

Hence it is in specialist language that the Newsgroups’ posts reveal their terminological richness, displaying the competence of the authors dealing with a particular jargon. Texts can be very accurate and terse in the lexical choices, but technical terms are often mixed with a poetic or funny style, just for the mere entertainment of the users:

[1] Sul tavolo un bicchiere di Cannubi Boschis 1997. Non guardo, mentre lo verso nella pentola in cui rosola l’asino, ma la nube di vapore che si sprigiona mi racconta di tannini rotondi, di ciliegia maturissima, e permea di lei l’aria d’intorno: la stanza è vino, la tavola è vino, e vino ed asino sono le mura, dilatate, inebrianti, selvatiche. [NUNC-cookingIT]

Within the NUNC-cooking there are conversations about cooking in general (recipes, restaurants, ingredients...), wine, beer... in five different languages, Italian, English, German, Spanish and French<sup>3</sup>. As we are going to sketch examples and case studies starting from an Italian-German dictionary, we will now concentrate only on these languages.

## 3. NUNC *kochen* – *Langenscheidt Praxis Wörterbuch*

The *Langenscheidt Praxiswörterbuch Gastronomie Italienisch* is a useful and practical reference guide into the main gastronomic terms of the Italian and German language.

Introducing their work the authors mention the limited number of entries, stressing the fact that possible lacks are due to the introductory nature of the dictionary that may be the starting point of a boundless work in progress, the NUNC corpora could thus be a good base for an extended version of such a resource.

First of all it is worth to check the actual use of the entries of the word list of the dictionary comparing them with the frequency list of nouns, adjectives and verbs of both the Italian and the German version of the NUNC-cooking. Of course some of the results will have to be expunged, as they are not representative of the cooking semantic field and they are therefore not useful for our research. For instance we are striking out nouns like *problema* or *idea*, verbs like *bringen* or *setzen* and general adjectives like *tutto* or *groß* that in our opinion should not necessarily be included in the headwords of a gastronomic dictionary. In the sample (Appendix 1) showing some of the occurrences extracted from the corpus we gave the rank of the item, but we left out such words.

Observing the results it comes out that almost all the most frequent words of the NUNC are listed in the *Langenscheidt Wörterbuch*. Except for some compound or really crystal clear word (such as *Zitronensaft* and *Rotwein* or *banana* and *tofu*...) there are two main different reasons for the absence of a word in the list: either it is slightly specific (such as *fermentatore*, NUNC-

<sup>1</sup> Searchable online at [www.corpora.unito.it/index\\_nunc.php](http://www.corpora.unito.it/index_nunc.php)

<sup>2</sup> We refer here to “varieties” on the basis of Corino 2007, as Newsgroups cannot be univocally identified with a singular textual form. They actually present different levels of communication and are distinguished one from another by different codes, registers, diastratic and diaphasic features...

<sup>3</sup> NUNC-cookingIT 4,161,627 tokens, NUNC-cookingEN 1,322,330, NUNC-cookingES 2,098,489 tokens, NUNC-cookingFR 4,900,590 tokens.

cookingIT rank 107 – 636 occurrences, or *cagliata*, NUNC-cookingIT rank 339 – 261 occurrences) or it is a loan word that is not usually translated in the other language (such as *spaghetti*, NUNCcookingDE rank 319 – 726 occurrences, or *pizza*, NUNCcookingDE rank 348 - 665 occurrences). This is mostly the case of words that are directly borrowed from Italian, whereas the contrary seems to be very rare.

It could be remarked that the occurrences sorted from the corpus—here used as a check of the dictionary headwords—that have a high frequency are commonly used by experts, semi-experts or novices of the “virtual cooking community”. One could then object to the dictionary list, claiming that terms like *pizza* or *spaghetti*, that are listed in the Italian-German section, are now commonly used in German as well and for this reason they should be also included in the German-Italian part.

It still needs saying that the dictionary list presents some inconsistencies especially when one compares the entries of the Italian-German section with the German-Italian ones. Let’s take, for example, the words *farina* – *Mehl*. Both nouns are ranked in a relatively similar position in the NUNC frequency list (see Table 2.), but they are dealt in different ways in the dictionary. First of all in the Italian-German part different types of *farina* are listed, but they appear as separate entries, whereas it would be a usual practice to put different sorts of the same item under a main heading.

**Farina** *f* Mehl *n*  
**Farina** *f* **di riso** Reismehl *n*  
**Farina** *f* **integrale** Vollkornmehl *n*

Figure 1

**Mehl** *n* farina *f* · **mit Mehl**  
**bestreuen** cospargere di farina ·  
**Mehl sieben** setacciare la farina

Figure 2

Secondly the criteria adopted to select the entries are not really clear cut, as we can find *farina di riso* and *farina integrale*, but not *farina bianca*, *farina gialla* or *farina forte/debole*, which have no direct translation in German and are though present in our corpus with a high number of occurrences.

The same is to be claimed for the German entries, that seem to ignore the wide variety of flour mixtures typical of the German tradition and commonly used when referring to *Mehl* (NUNC-cookingDE):

- [2] Milch erhitzen und das Maismehl einrühren , bei sehr geringer Hitze
- [3] etwas kg Quark 200 g Weckmehl vom Hefezopf 3 tb Mondamin
- [4] 4 l Zitrt 50 g Zucker 30 g Paniermehl 100 g Walnuß kerne <t
- [5] ist ein pflanzliches Bindemittel aus Johannisbrotkernmehl , das anstelle von Mehl , Ei)
- [6] Natürliche Bindemittel Guarkernmehl Zutaten : Guarkernmehl E 412 ="82">
- [7] Yield : 1 Rezept 150 g Weizenmehl 150 g Maismehl
- [8] Das Hartweizenmehl mit Eiern , Olivenoel , Salz , Pfeffer zu einem < st von Christina Phil es
- [9] Roggenmehl , Roggenmalz und etwas Salz . Ich habe das Zeug Mit Spezialgeliermitteln aus
- [10] tb Vollkornmehl 2 tb Paniermehl ; aus Vollkorn 1 tb Vollkornmehl

The entry shown in figure 2 introduces patterns. Phraseology and collocations are difficult to be found in the articles of the dictionary and this is one of the rare examples, once again it is not constantly applied to both the Italian and German sections.

Still this seems to be a structural choice of the authors to follow a strict alphabetical order and, though it may seem odd to dictionary users, it is at least consistent through all the

*Praxiswörterbuch* (see Figure 3) and could be explained by the actual practical nature of this particular dictionary.

<p><b>Salsiccia</b> <i>f</i> Wurst <i>f</i>  <b>Salsiccia</b> <i>f</i> <b>bianca</b> Weißwurst <i>f</i>  <b>Salsiccia</b> <i>f</i> <b>cruda</b> Rohwurst <i>f</i></p>
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Figure 3

This choice reveals to be functional in the Italian-German part of the dictionary, but creates some discrepancies in the German-Italian part as cannot always be applied in a consistent way to the modifier-head structure of German compounds, as a result we have some entries listed in a row after *Wurst* (Figure 4), but others are put in alphabetical order (Figures 5 and 6) and therefore they seem to have no direct relation to the word considered.

<p><b>Wurst</b> <i>f</i> salsiccia <i>f</i>, Würstel <i>m</i>  <b>Wurst</b> <i>f</i>/ <b>größere</b> salame <i>m</i>  <b>Würstchen</b> <i>n</i> piccola salsiccia <i>f</i>  <b>Wurstfüllung</b> <i>f</i> carne <i>f</i> di salsiccia</p>
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Figure 4

<p><b>Weißwurst</b> <i>f</i> Salsiccia <i>f</i> bianca</p>
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Figure 5

<p><b>Rohwurst</b> <i>f</i> Salsiccia <i>f</i> cruda</p>
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Figure 6

### 3.1. *Risotto*

In the *Langenscheidt Praxiswörterbuch Gastronomie Italienisch* *Risotto* is not translated, instead the article contains a general description of the characteristics of a typical Italian dish (Figure 7). What follows is a short account of some flavourings of the same dish (Figure 8).

<p><b>Risotto</b> <i>m</i> Reisgericht in vielen Varianten und Farben je nach Zutaten und Geschmack, meist mit geriebenem Parmesan bestreut</p>
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Figure 7

<p>Risotto <i>m</i> al salto  Risotto <i>m</i> alla milanese  Risotto <i>m</i> con le cozze  Risotto <i>m</i> con le salsicce</p>
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Figure 8

It is not clear how the authors chose those *risotti*. On the one hand they are quite typical and widespread over the regional boundaries, but on the other hand the corpus search (rankIT 239, rankDE 272) highlighted some other important kinds of *risotto* that should be included when drawing up a list. Some of these are (NUNCcookingIT):

[11] " **risotto alla zucca** " 1 Da buon bastiancontrari , ho deciso di fare un esperimento . Ho appena finito di mangiare una

[12] , tipo tomini sott' olio un po' piccanti , frittata verde , insalata di sedano e parmigiano ... primo : **risotto con porri e formaggio raschera** ( che non ho mai fatto ma che ho mangiato -splendido- da un amico ) secondo

[13] un secondo . 1 primo e secondo , ovviamente , vanno coordinati . per esempio pesce ? pesce ! **risotto alla marinara e pesce al forno** . il pesce cuoce in forno . il risotto no :-)) :-))

[14] **Risotto ai Funghi** Ingr : 500 gr di funghi champignons 320 gr di riso mezza cipolla un bicchiere di vino bianco secco

Choosing among all the likely combinations of ingredients that could be used to prepare a risotto would be like compiling a list of the sauces one could serve pasta with, that is to say anything possible!

Looking up the frequency lists it comes out that there are significant occurrences only for *risotto alla milanese* and very few—if not even none—for the others. In comparison to the headwords of the dictionary some of the possibilities suggested by the corpus could have been more sensible choices.

<i>Risotto alla Milanese</i>	10
<i>Risotto al salto</i>	0
<i>Risotto con le/alle cozze</i>	0
<i>Risotto con le/la salsiccia</i>	2
<i>Risotto con le seppie</i>	0
<i>Risotto ai funghi</i>	10
<i>Risotto alla zucca</i>	10
<i>Risotto alla parmigiana</i>	4

Table 1

As regards the possible constructions that should be included under the lemma *risotto* there is the verb *mantecare*, which is commonly used to refer to the process of making a smooth and creamy mixture by adding butter or cream in order to amalgamate the ingredients of a dish. It could refer to sauces, but it is often related to one of the last procedures one has to follow when preparing a risotto (NUNC-cooking IT):

[15] due alle zucchine dal sapore buono ma decisamente freddi . Per primo piatto io scelgo un “ Risotto al radicchio **mantecato** al vino rosso ” dal sapore troppo robusto e dalla cottura , benché espressa , passata , penso che dipenda

[16] maniera , con 50g di cipolla e senza usare il consommé di pomodoro ma il brodo di pollo . **Ho mantecato** usualmente il riso ma senza formaggio . Non ho aggiunto i pomodorini al riso , ma li ho fatti cuocere

[17] poi ) . Ricordati che se anche il riso ti resta un po’ indietro , poi finsice di cuocere mentre **manteca** ! Con un minuto di riposo nella pentola ottieni un riso perfetto anche se sera indietro , sempre se era

Despite its large use, the verb is neither present as a single entry nor in connection with other lemmata.

### 3.2. Wine

In the Italian NUNC-cooking frequency list we can find many terms concerning wine or beer which are not included in the dictionary headwords. The authors justify this lack saying that the great variety of Italian wine and grapes and the characteristics of Italian enology makes it difficult to insert a fairly complete list of terms.

It seems though that some important nouns have been left out, *mosto* (rank 69 – 866 occurrences) and *malto* (rank 60 – 924 occurrences), for instance, and important adjectives as *paglierino* and *ambrato* concerning wine description.

*Consistenza* and *Konsistenz* are included in the word list, but the actual use of the noun is not clearly exemplified. Moreover the adjectives *consistente* and *Konsistent* have not been built-in, although they are used in the corpus and, what is more, they seem to have different distribution according to the language considered: in Italian both adjective and noun often refer to the description of wines [18]-[19] (NUNC-cookingIT), whereas in German they are applied on the whole to a wider range of food and drinks [20], [22] and there are less occurrences where linked to wine [21] (NUNC-cookingDE).

[18] pareva che la bucase , forse sbaglio ad esprimermi , non concentrato nel senso di " pastoso " , di **consistenza** , ma nel senso di " gusto concentrato " Io non ho fatto il corso AIS o ONAV e quindi

[19] colore rosso granato profumo fruttato e anche un sentore di liquirizia gusto tannico e **consistente** anche sulle labbra tutto sommato discreto anche da meditazione prezzo

[20] Mit der angerührten Tapiokastärke binden und kochen bis eine kleisterähnliche **Konsistenz** entsteht . Feigen und Haselnusskerne zufügen . Abschmecken .

[21] mit fortschreitendem Alter immer besser und schöner . Er hat eine leicht ölige **Konsistenz** . In meinem Bestand gibt es noch eine versiegelte Flasche aus dem Jahr 1983 .

[22] was einkochen lassen und die Sahne begeben . Solange kochen , bis eine saemige **Konsistenz** entsteht . Mit Salz und Pfeffer wuerzen und mit einem Stabmixer umgekehrt , die Kartoffeln wuerden sonst aufweichen und ihre knusprige **Konsistenz** verlieren .

Other adjectives describing wine—and flavour in general—that should be inserted in the word list on the base of their frequency in the corpus could be *fruttato* and *erbaceo*, *floreale* and *speziato*, as well as *persistente*.

#### 4. Conclusion

Gastronomy is an important part of our culture, dictionaries devoted to this subject are on the rise and they need more abundant and updated materials where they can find new terms and verify the actual use of their headwords. In this contribution we have briefly sketched how one can use a “modern” tool as a corpus of newsgroups to achieve this challenging aim. The need of instruments to determine this kind of LSP is then particularly patent.

Our results show how the Italian language has coded more and more specific terms to define the tasting activity and the characteristics of taste itself. Furthermore the frequency list of nouns gives us a likely idea of one country’s gastronomic culture, among the German words we can find a great number of spices (*Basilikum*, *Kümmel*, *Majoran*...) that do not appear in the Italian list, whereas in the latter there are more terms referring to wine.

Finally there are words that are closely related to the semantic sphere around gastronomy, though they do not describe food but persons; special attention should be given for instance to the 686 occurrences of *Mampfer*, a colloquial but still very specific word for “glutton” that should undeniably be part of the word list of a gastronomic dictionary.

All in all we think that the analysed dictionary is a very good starting point to create lexicographical resources devoted to gastronomy, nevertheless it would be essential to add at least a brief description of the words listed in order to have a real dictionary instead of a simple bilingual glossary. More detailed articles furnished with corpus driven examples would also stress and make thus clearer the cultural juxtapositions and variables illustrated by Mayer and Rovere (2007) about the different ways of understanding a dish.

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**Appendix 1. Sample of cooking words listed in decreasing frequency**

NUNCcookingIT		NUNCcookingDE	
Rank	Word	Rank	Word
1	vino	1	Salz
2	acqua	2	Gramm
3	birra	3	Minuten
4	zucchero	4	Pfeffer
5	pasta	5	Butter
8	ricetta	6	Essl
9	latte	7	Wasser
10	lievito	8	Zucker
14	farina	9	ml
15	olio	11	Menge
17	burro	13	Rezept
18	vini	14	Kategorien
19	forno	15	Mehl
20	carne	16	Öl
21	sale	17	Fleisch
22	fermentazione	18	Teel.
25	cottura	19	Pfanne
26	temperatura	20	Teig
27	pane	21	Sauce
28	uova	22	Zwiebel
33	bottiglia	23	Kartoffeln
35	ristorante	24	Milch
36	cioccolato	25	Eier

NUNCcookingIT		NUNCcookingDE	
Rank	Word	Rank	Word
38	gr	26	Sahne
41	prezzo	27	Portionen
43	formaggio	28	Zwiebeln
44	impasto	29	Petersilie
45	base	30	Scheiben
46	bottiglie	31	Knoblauch
47	gusto	32	Tomaten
48	piatto	33	Grad
49	pesce	34	Olivenöl
50	birre	35	Topf
51	gr.	36	Hitze
52	fondo	38	Zitronensaft
54	panna	39	Gemüse
55	crema	41	Zutaten
56	ingredienti	42	Ofen
57	produzione	43	Eigelb
58	animali	44	Backofen
59	malto	45	Streifen
60	uovo	46	Form