

Flowers and Flour

A strange connection born from the famous legend of Santa Zita



Have you ever asked yourself why the city is full of flowers, in particular during the last part of April? Well, it sounds incredible, but flour and flowers are connected to each other in Lucca. One of the many legends in Lucca can help us to figure this out: that of Santa Zita.

You can still see her in her glass tomb in San Frediano church, how incredible! Born in Monsagrati (near Lucca) on 27 April 1218, she was a young generous servant who worked for a rich and strict master. However, she would always find the courage to help people in need, by offering her master's bread to them. One day her master approached and asked about the contents of the apron. Stunned by fear she blurted out: **Roses!**, and a stream of roses fell from her apron in a gentle manner.

Thanks to this miracle, and many others, Zita is venerated as a patron of Lucca. You can still feel the atmosphere today, by paying a visit to her at San Frediano Church, smelling the flowers in the streets, and tasting the food dedicated to her: square-shaped biscuits that look like little fields raked by *contadini*.

It was Michele Tambellini who had the initial idea of creating these biscuits and who gave them to Sandra Bianchi of *Angolo Dolce* in Borgo Giannotti to bake. These biscuits, also called *miracolo 1*, can be enjoyed with a cup of tea or coffee, cheese snacks, wine, beer, or liqueur.

A local liqueur, *Zitino*, this too named for Santa Zita, is a perfect accompaniment to these biscuits. A mixture of ingredients and spices typical of Lucca, *Zitino* was created by Mauro Picchi, a renowned and very popular barman in Lucca. The secret ingredient of *Zitino* is *Biadina di Tista* liqueur, which gives the drink its good flavour.

I recently visited an employee of Caffè Biscotteria Santa Zita in Piazza San Frediano and asked her some questions about her work.

- *For how long have you been making these biscuits? Is Sandra still baking them?*

- *We've been making them for just over a year. Sandra entrusted the recipe only to this shop. They're produced in Poggibonsi.*

- *May I ask you or Sandra the recipe of the biscuits?*

- *I'm sorry, but the recipe is top secret: this is the only shop that knows it.*

- *Are there other places where you sell these biscuits, especially during the festival of Santa Zita?*

- *Not for now, we sell them only here, but during the Desco Saperi & Saperi festival, we also offer some tastings.*

- *Is there anything else you would like to say to our readers?*

- *We really recommend them to you, they're delicious and a different kind of biscuit to taste!*

- by Nicolò Urbani
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