

Smith College
LA CUCINA FUTURISTICA

A **FUTURIST
DINNER PARTY**

Savoring Italy
Apr 14, 2011
SIETE-INVITATI

Futurism...

"...was a far-reaching Italian movement that included poetry, literature, painting, graphics, typography, sculpture, product design, architecture, photography, cinema and the performing arts and focused on the dynamic, energetic and violent character of changing 20th century life, especially city life. It particularly emphasized the power, force and motion of machinery combined with the contemporary fascination with speed while at the same time denouncing the 'static' art of the past and the old-fashioned establishment. On the downside it also glorified war, apparently denigrated women, initially favored Fascism and vilified artistic tradition wanting to '...destroy the museums, libraries, academies of every kind...'" <http://www.futurism.org.uk/futurism.htm>

Futurism...

Futurism was an Italian movement that came to the forefront of European art in **1909** when Filippo Tommaso Marinetti published the

Manifesto of Futurism.

At the Time, Marinetti was the only member of the movement, but within a year artists such as Giocomo Balla and Umberto Boccioni joined when they co-signed *The Manifesto of Futurist Painting.*

Futurism...

- Several factors contributed to the rise of Futurism. Because of its very recent unification, Italy was politically and socially backwards when compared with the rest of Europe. ***The Futurists desperately wanted to bring Italy into the 20th century, no matter what it took.***
- Artistically, Futurism is often viewed as an offshoot of Cubism. Balla's and Boccioni's use of hard lines and geometric shapes that characterized early Futurism is closely related to the Cubist movement. ***How the Futurists explored speed, light, and movement, however, was very original.***

Futurism...

Futurism can be divided into **2 phases**, and **5 areas of experimentation**.

- 1st phase (early 1910s): it is considered the "analytical" phase. This phase was based in artistic experimentation.
- 2nd phase (latter half of the 1910s): it was dubbed the "synthetic" phase. It is during this phase that some of the most innovative Futurist work was done.

In their attempts to capture the changing world around them, the Futurists explored 5 main areas of experimentation:

Simultaneity of Views

This was an **analysis of movement.**

Balla's *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* (1912) is a perfect example, as it shows the complete range of movement of the leash, the dog's paws, and the feet of its master.



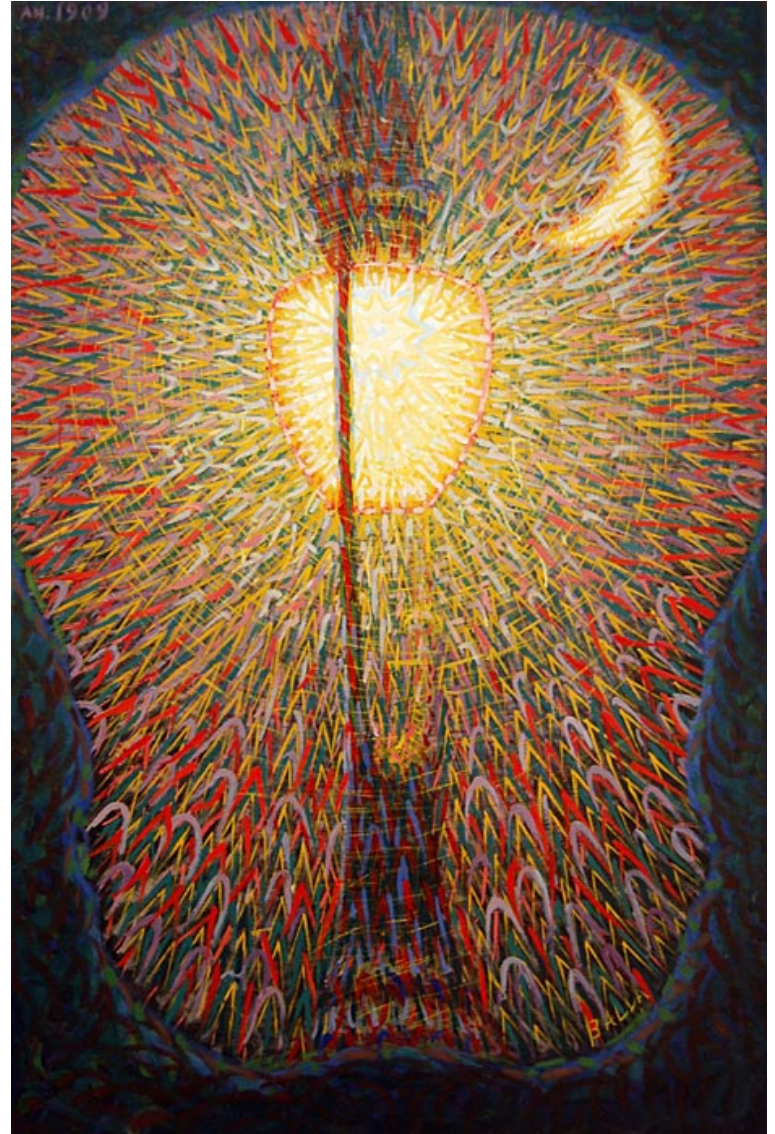
Albright-Knox Art Gallery,
Buffalo, NY

The **pictorial representation of speed** was also popular, as demonstrated by Balla's *Speed of a Motorcycle* (1913).



Abstraction of Light and Color

Futurists analyzed and tried to capture on canvas the **effects of light** itself, exemplified by Balla's *Street Lamp* (1909).



MoMA,
New York, NY

Plastic Dynamism

This is the **investigation of form**. Boccioni applied Balla's representational technique in his *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* (1913). This is considered the definitive work of Futurist sculpture. **The piece highlights the formal and spatial effects of motion rather than their source** (the human figure).

Tate Modern,
London, UK



Plurality of interpretations

Severini's *Plastic Synthesis of the Idea 'War'* (1915) is an excellent example of **how multilayered personal perception and interpretation are.**



MoMA,
New York, NY

Prismatic view

This can be described as a **shattering effect**.

Objects, figures or actions are “broken into pieces”.

Severini's *The Blue Dancer* (1912) shows this to great effect.



Peggy Guggenheim Collection,
Venice, Italy

Dynamics of a Footballer (1913)
by Umberto Boccioni



Funeral of the Anarchist Galli (1911)
by Carlo Carra



Dynamism of an Automobile (1912/13)
by Luigi Russolo



Filippo Tommaso Marinetti

[1876-1944]

Italian-French prose writer, novelist, poet, dramatist, the ideological founder of Futurism. Marinetti was educated in Egypt, France, Italy, and Switzerland and began his literary career working for an Italian–French magazine in Milan. During most of his life his base was in France. He made frequent trips to Italy and wrote in both languages.

Futurism had its official beginning with the publication of Marinetti's "Manifeste de Futurisme" in the Paris newspaper *Le Figaro* (Feb. 20, 1909). His ideas were quickly adopted in Italy by many writers.



Filippo Tommaso Marinetti

[1876-1944]

Marinetti's manifesto was also endorsed by Futurist painters, who published a manifesto of their own in 1910. Such painters and sculptors as Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla, and Gino Severini carried out Marinetti's ideas.

In a volume of poems, *Guerra sola igiene del mondo* (1915; "War the Only Hygiene of the World"), Marinetti exulted over the outbreak of World War I and urged that Italy be involved. He became an active Fascist, an enthusiastic backer of Mussolini, and argued that Fascism was the natural extension of Futurism. Although his views helped temporarily to ignite Italian patriotism, Marinetti lost most of his following by the second decade of the 20th c.



Founding and Manifesto of Futurism

[February 20, 1909]



1. We intend to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and fearlessness.
2. Courage, audacity, and revolt will be essential elements of our poetry.
3. Up to now literature has exalted a pensive immobility, ecstasy, and sleep. We intend to exalt aggressive action, a feverish insomnia, the racer's stride, the mortal leap, the punch and the slap.
4. We affirm that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath - a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace.
5. We want to hymn the man at the wheel, who hurls the lance of his spirit across the Earth, along the circle of its orbit.
6. The poet must spend himself with ardour, splendour, and generosity, to swell the enthusiastic fervour of the primordial elements.
7. Except in struggle, there is no more beauty. No work without an aggressive character can be a masterpiece. Poetry must be conceived as a violent attack on unknown forces, to reduce and prostrate them before man.

Founding and Manifesto of Futurism

[February 20, 1909]

7. We stand on the last promontory of the centuries!... Why should we look back, when what we want is to break down the mysterious doors of the Impossible? Time and Space died yesterday...
8. We will glorify war - the world's only hygiene - militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers ...
9. We will destroy the museums, libraries, academies of every kind, will fight moralism...
10. We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure, and by riot; we will sing of the multicolored, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals; we will sing of the vibrant nightly fervor of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; greedy railway stations that devour smoke-plumed serpents; factories hung on clouds by the crooked lines of their smoke; bridges that stride the rivers like giant gymnasts, flashing in the sun with a glitter of knives; adventurous steamers that sniff the horizon; deep-chested locomotives whose wheels paw the tracks like the hooves of enormous steel horses bridled by tubing; and the sleek flight of planes whose propellers chatter in the wind like banners and seem to cheer like an enthusiastic crowd.

[F. T. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism" \(1909\)](#)
[Read by Charles Bernstein as part of the Futurism and the New Manifesto program, February 20, 2009](#)



Marinetti made it clear that **Futurism aimed at a transformation of life in both its physiological and psychological aspects, and especially of social, cultural and political conditions in the modern metropolis.**



He saw in Futurism **not only an artistic but also a social and political force of innovation.**

His project of renewal thus comprised all aspects of human life, and was conceived as a total and permanent revolution.

...one such aspects was food.



La Cucina Futurista (1932)

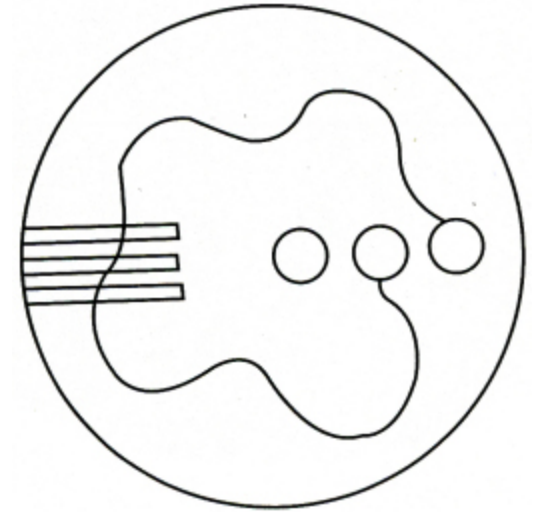
- F. T. Marinetti and painter Fillia (Luigi Colombo) proposed to transform food into raw material for art.
- *La Cucina Futurista* is technically not a cookbook, but another Futurist call to arms, to incite a culinary revolution throughout Italy.
- After ART and LANGUAGE, **FOOD was the tool to confuse and disorient Italian culture so as to reorganize it.**
- This revolution was to be achieved through the destruction of Italy's past tradition and culture and prompt modernization.
- It purposely broke with every existing culinary tradition.



'Manifeste de la cuisine futuriste' (1913)

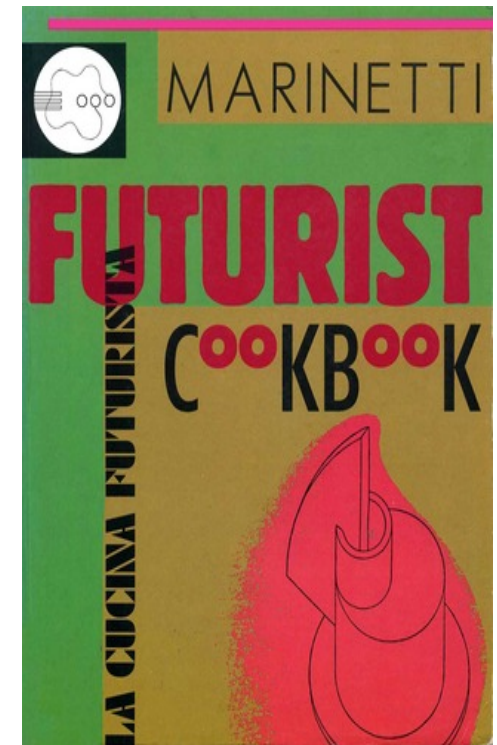
*We want a cuisine in tune with modern life and the latest scientific inventions. Amongst all the arts, **only the art of cooking has lingered in a primitive, bestial state.** We are still waiting for a really new dish. The same courses march over our tables, shamefully disguised; the only thing that changes are the ridiculous and pretentious names given to them.*

Futurism has set itself the task of renewing culinary art.** Having swept a liberating wing over the world [...] Not only humans and ideas shift, things shift too. **The mouth through which passes food, the provider of energy, is the essential part of the body** [...] Chefs and scullions, shameless adventurers, your white livery will be your shroud! We shall send forth the rays of our sunshine into the lairs of your kitchens, and the gloom will vanish. **We shall overturn your buffet tables! We shall pull down your ovens! We shall throw your plague-ridden pastries and your pus-filled phials into the river!



The Futurist Cookbook (1932)

- Marinetti stated: “Italian cuisine is over.”
- Foods were to be used according to their **aesthetic value**.
- COLOR, **SHAPE**, **TEXTURE** mattered more than taste.
- It is unlikely that many Italians ever attempted to concoct Futurist dishes.
- The Futurists focused on **the creation of a new lifestyle called *aerovita*** (*aerial philosophy of life*), which included **cooking and dining as para-theatrical arts**.
- **Futurists saw banquets in a theatrical framework as highly developed performative art.**

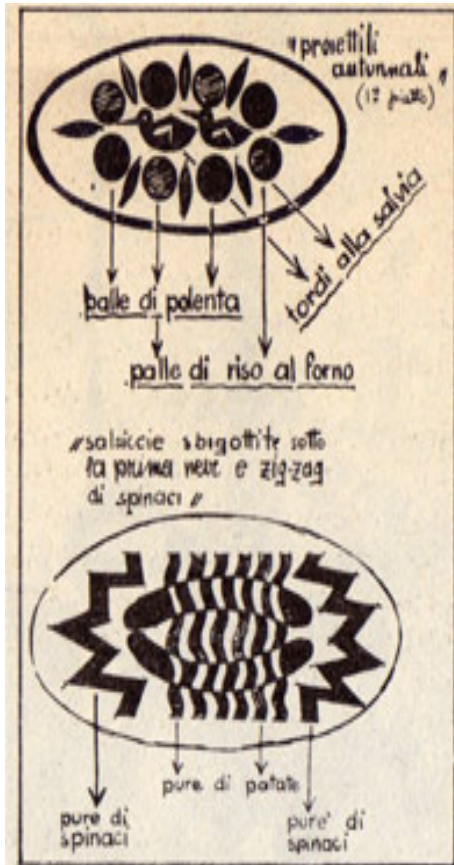


Taverna del Santopalato

- They founded 3 night clubs and opened several restaurants dedicated to a renewal of Italian culinary habits.
- The first restaurant was the *Taverna del Santopalato* in Turin.
- It not only served food, but also functioned as an arts center holding competitions and organizing Futurist poetry evenings, art exhibitions, and fashion shows.
- The interior (designed by Fillia) made ample use of aluminum, as a material of the modern age, and of indirect lighting to amplify the metallic, shining, elastic, light, and serene atmosphere.







Menù futurista di Fortunato Depero, 1929-30 (collezione privata)

A destra: locandina della Taverna del Santopalato



Recipes (or rather scenarios) in the Futurist cookbook *La cucina futurista* of 1932 derived from banquets that Marinetti had organized as a kind of **savoury-olfactory-tactile theatre** accompanied by music and poetry recitations. The highly imaginative table scenery and food sculptures were complemented by **inventive lighting effects** and an **amazing *mise en scène* of interior decor, furniture, and waiters' garb.**

The first properly designed Futurist banquets were organized in 1930-31.

The walls and tables were covered with aluminum foil and the dining tables were arranged at sloping angles to give the impression of airplanes in mid-flight. Instead of flowers, the table scenery made use of artistically carved and brightly colored potatoes; bread was replaced with rolls baked in the shape of monoplanes and propellers; vinum vulgare was served in oil cans, and multi colored cocktails enhanced the visual appearance and taste of the dishes.

[Dining at an aerobanquet of Futurist food](#)



Left: Marinetti at a Futurist banquet in Tunis.

Below: table setting at the Tunis banquet.



Manifesto of Futurist Cooking (Dec 28, 1930)

- The **abolition of all “traditional pairings”** and “mediocre daily customs”.
- **Abolition of tableware** and a return to the “*tactile pleasures*” of eating.
- He envisioned **new forms of food that pleased the eyes**, even before the tongue.
- **Perfumes to be paired with dishes.**
- The **presentation of food**: not to be eaten, but to stimulate one’s imagination and desire.
- *Bite-sized morsels “that contain ten, twenty flavors to taste in a few seconds”.*
- He wanted to “*create plastic, flavorful, colorful, aromatic and tactile substances*” for real “*stimulating meals*”.

Manifesto of Futurist Cooking (Dec 28, 1930)

- **Abolition of *pastasciutta***: “an absurd gastronomic religion.”
- Eating pasta made Italians sluggish, pacifists and backwards.
- It drained them of their energy, creativity and intelligence.

“We should liberate ourselves from pasta, which is also a form of slavery. It puffs out our cheeks like grotesque masks on a fountain, it stuffs our gullets as if we were Christmas turkeys, it ties up our insides with its flabby strings; it nails us to the chair, gorged and stupefied, apoplectic and gasping, with [a] sensation of uselessness”

- Surrender oneself to any food was a shameful act; perpetual surrender meant generations of listless and dispassionate Italians.
- Pasta to be replaced by appetizing food sculptures and innovative dishes.
- Pills and chemical products will supply essential nutrients.

Manifesto of Futurist Cooking (Dec 28, 1930)

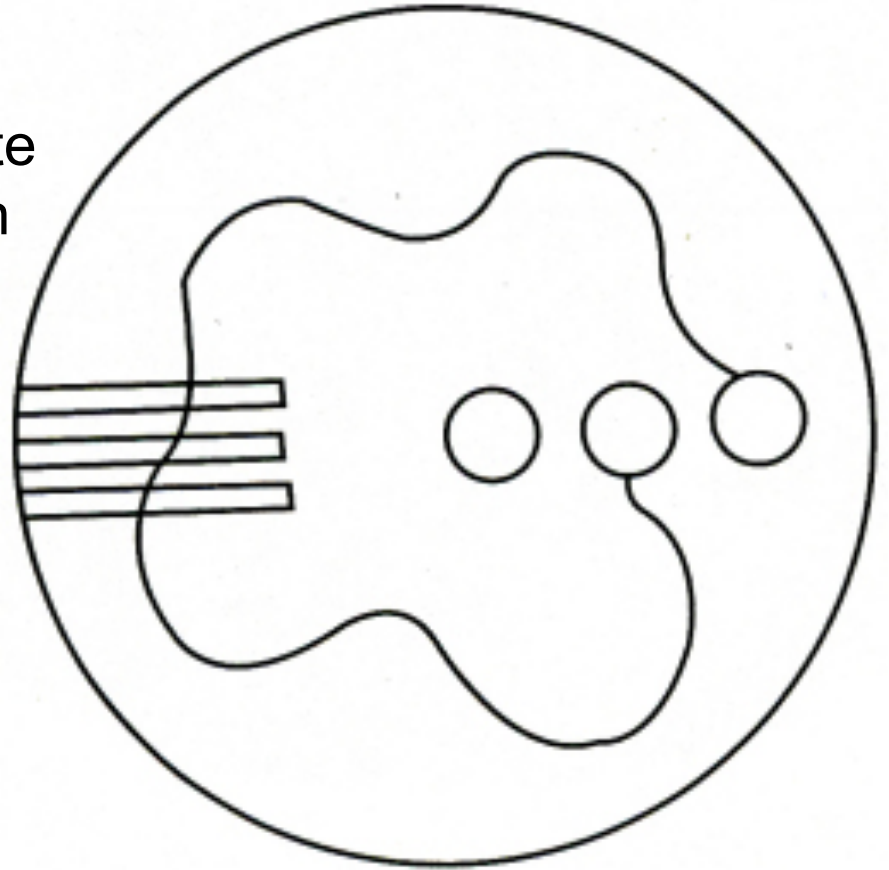
- elevating the chef to the rank of sculptor, stage designer, and director of a performative event.
- accentuating the taste of the dishes with novel combinations of shape, color, and texture.
- abolishing knife and fork to enhance the tactile enjoyment of food.
- mixing unusual, exotic, and rare ingredients into the food in order to achieve surprise effects.
- decorating the room in a style that is best suited to the event, creating an imaginative table scenery and presenting the food on plates specially designed for the purpose.
- complementing the sequence of dishes with an accompanying program of instrumental music, poetry recitations, song, dance.

Futurist Music

Percazzottare

Cover the bottom of a round plate in fondue delicately flavored with grappa. On a radius of the plate arrange equidistant from one another, and in a cone, 3 halves of red pepper baked and filled with a vegetable paste consisting of asparagus tips, celery and fennel hearts, spring onions, capers, baby artichokes, and olives.

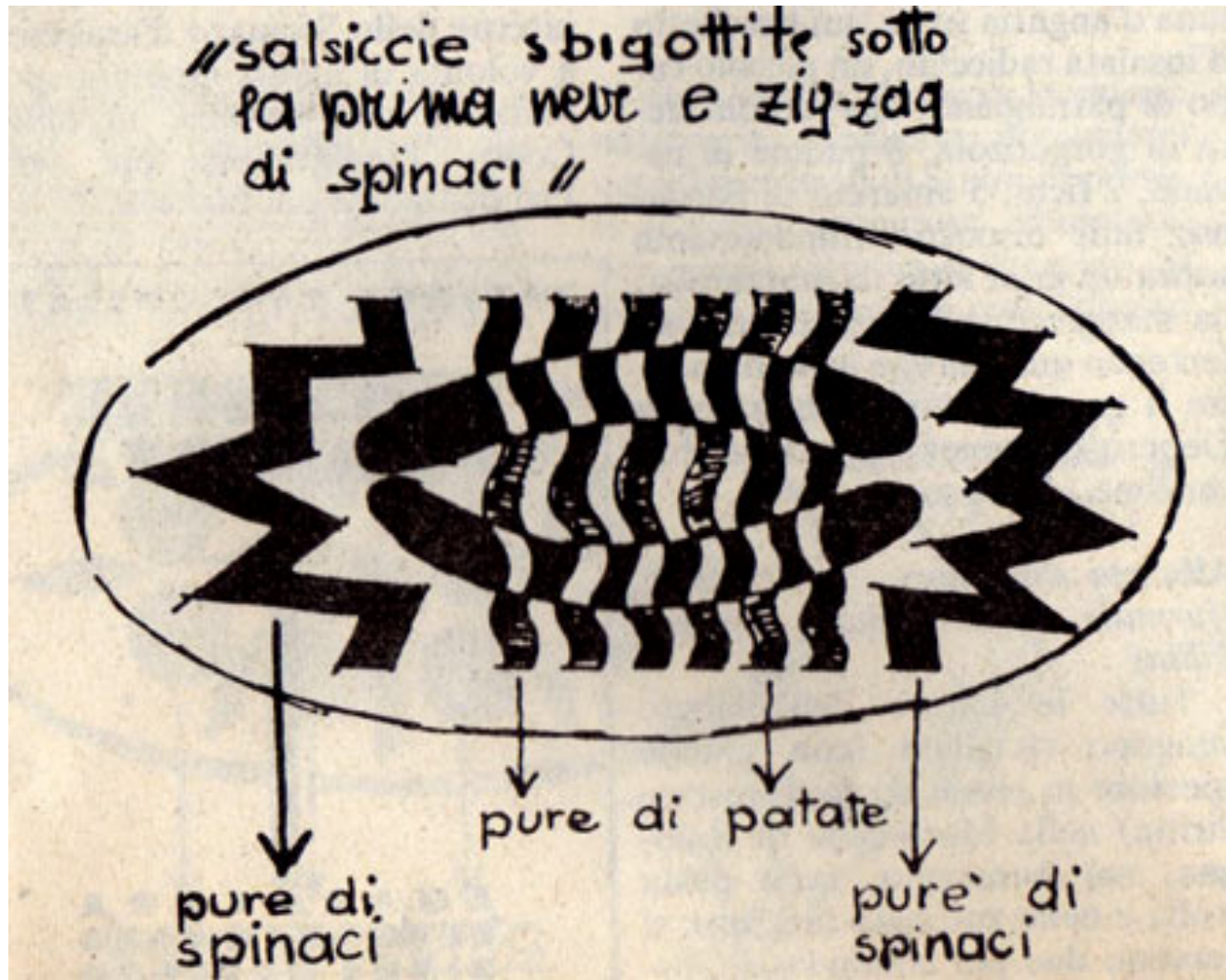
On the opposite side, arrange 3 boiled leek stalks. An arabesque of grated truffle that starts from the 2nd pepper and finishes at the outer one completes the dish".



Futurist aperitif: cup of shivers



Futurist recipe: Sausages dismayed under the first snow and the zig-zag of spinach.



[Cucina futurista](#)

Futurist recipes

Aerofood: The diner is served from the right with a plate containing some black olives and fennel hearts. From the left it is served with a rectangle made of sandpaper, silk and velvet. The foods must be carried directly to the mouth with the right hand while the left hand lightly and repeatedly strokes the tactile rectangle. In the meantime the waiters spray the napes of the diners' necks with a perfume of carnations while from the kitchen comes contemporaneously a violent sound of an airplane motor and some music by Bach.

Taste Buds Take Off: A soup of concentrated meat stock, champagne, and grappa, garnished with rose petals.

Simultaneous Ice-Cream: Vanilla dairy cream and little squares of raw onion frozen together.

Spring Paradox: A big cylinder of plain ice cream has peeled bananas standing on top of it to look like palm trees. Hide some hard-boiled eggs, with their yolks removed and filled with plum jam, among the bananas.

Futurist recipes

Beautiful Nude Food Portrait: A crystal bowl filled with fresh milk and the flesh of two boiled capons, all scattered with violet petals.

Equator + North Pole: “An equatorial sea of golden poached egg yolks” surrounds a cone made of whipped egg whites. This is “dotted with orange segments like succulent pieces of the sun” and black truffle carved to look like airplanes.

The Excited Pig: A “whole salami, skinned” is cooked in strong espresso coffee and flavored with eau-de-cologne.

Candied Atmospheric Electricities: Brilliantly-colored bars of marbled soup, filled with sweet cream.

Diabolical Roses: Red roses, battered and deep-fried.

Zoological Soup: Pastry in animal shapes, made of rice flour and eggs, filled with jam and served in a hot pink broth spiked with a few drops of Italian eau de Cologne.

Intuitive Antipasto: Hollow out an orange to form a little basket in which are placed different kinds of salami, some butter, some pickled mushrooms, anchovies and green peppers. The basket perfumes the various elements with orange. Inside the peppers are hidden little cards printed with a Futurist phrase or a surprising saying. (For example: 'Futurism is an anti-historical movement,' 'Live dangerously,' 'With Futurist cooking, doctors, pharmacists and grave diggers will be out of work,' etc.).

White and Black: A one-man-show on the internal walls of the stomach consisting of free-form arabesques of whipped cream sprinkled with lime-tree charcoal. Contra the blackest indigestion. Pro the whitest teeth.