



Mountains of Cheese, Rivers of Wine: Paesi di Cuccagna and Other Gastronomic Utopias

by Luisa Del Giudice

Paesi di Cuccagna and Other Gastronomic Utopias." The Paese di Cuccagna, known variously as the land of Cockaigne, Lubberland, or the Big Rock Candy Mountain, is a mythic place of plenty where rivers run with wine, food falls like manna from heaven, work is banished, and no one ever grows old. Although in the European folk worldview, this centuries-old topos is a sensual paradise, the Italian variant becomes a strictly gastronomic utopia, surviving in Italian popular consciousness for centuries and still animating Italian and immigrant culture in the United States. This illustrated lecture examines this idea through folksong, legend, narrative, festival, and broadside; places this food utopia in historical context; and explores its relocation to the new world, as the driving mythos behind mass migration to America (otherwise known as Cuccagna) and its role in Italian/American folk culture and foodways.

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