

Traditional Foods of Puglia Italy-Cooking Lampascioni Hyacinth Bulbs



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In the market in Syracuse we came across a traditional food that is common in Puglia, though less so here in Sicily – *lampascioni*. Similar in appearance to little onions, *lampascioni* are actually the bulb of a tassel hyacinth, the *muscari comosum*. These are a common wildflower especially in southern Italy, though few people realize that you can eat the bulb. *Lampascioni* are a classic example of Italian peasant cuisine, using free ingredients combined with a fair amount of labor and know-how to turn an odd edible food into a delectable dish. Or so we hoped.

Emanuele remembers *lampascioni* from his childhood in Puglia, though he remembers little of how his Pugliese mother prepared them, other than “cutting a cross in the bottom.” I remember eating *lampascioni* that had been preserved in vinegar and oil as an *antipasto* in Puglia, but neither of us had ever cooked them.



Though it felt like we were cheating to buy the *lampascioni* rather than dig them up, we decided it was worth it to try them out (and since this wild hyacinth is already blooming in our fields, we have the excuse that it is too late to dig them up anyway.)

Emanuele began to clean them and was soon grossed out by the clear sticky liquid that came oozing out of each *lampascione*. Sound unappetizing? It gets worse.

We decided the sticky substance must have a scientific name, and settled on “goo”. Peeling the *lampascioni* with this goo oozing out makes everything stick to your hands – dirt, peel, roots, and, soon, fingers against fingers. This is what I imagine it’s like working in a glue factory, only dirtier.