

# Strange Fruit

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Project author or developer:  
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The idea behind Strange Fruit stems from speculations around the tomato as "political agent". With its origins in Central America, the tomato eventually landed in Europe after a long, eastward voyage, and underwent curious changes: while technically a fruit, it is a vegetable by general reckoning and so popular it is too, so crucial to our cuisine, that it also became an emblem of the "Mediterranean diet", entering UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2009. Like other migrants, the tomato suffered discrimination, abuse, and condemnation; charges against it range from being poisonous, nutritionally worthless, merely ornamental, to its inclusion in witches' potions for transforming men into werewolves. A brighter side of its history is recorded in the names it has been called: while "golden" (Pomo d'oro) in common Italian usage, it once was the "love apple" (Pomo d'Amore) of the Sicilians, the French (Pomme d'amour), the English (Love Apple), and Germans (Liebesapfel); in scientific binomial classification, though, it is *Solanum Lycopersicum*, which in Latin means "wolves' peach". The modern age of the tomato only dawned with Antonio Latini's *Lo scalco alla moderna* (Naples, 1694): after a 200-year struggle to gain acceptance, Latini's recipes finally acknowledged the tomato's rightful place in Italian cooking. Strange Fruit transposes the journeying theme from the tomato to the men and women who grow and crop them. Today's farmhands in rural Italy are mostly migrants, usually fleeing war and famine, and the crops they pick will often be exported back to their very homelands. So it is that food industry policies engender a perverse short-circuit of trade routes, migratory routes, and individual life-stories with human and environmental welfare ranking low in the scale of values, and profits high up. The partnership between Aspra.mente, designer duo Luigi Greco & Mattia Paco Rizzi, artist Luigi Coppola and activist from Casa delle Agricolture (Castiglione - LE) seeks to activate a web of connections and exchanges around a mobile kitchen. Their programme includes a cooking course for migrants targeted at HACCP compliance (and licensing in collaboration with the Cooperativa Diaconia, Frosinone); a tomato-centred series of food-tasting events featuring traditional Mediterranean recipes; the creation of a line of table napkins, hand decorated using natural inks and printed with the aid of the Antica Stamperia Pascucci. The napkins will be part donated to the Casa delle Agricolture di Castiglione d'Otranto (LE), and part sold: proceeds from the sale will close a productive cycle aimed at creating work opportunities for migrants and defending biodiversity in the rural areas in which the Casa delle Agricolture operates. Credits Strange Fruit 2015 a project by Aspra.mente (Eva Cenghiaro, Giulia Gabrielli, Gabriella Guida e Alessandra Saviotti) in collaboration with Luigi Greco & Matteo Paco Rizzi, Luigi Coppola, Casa delle Agricolture di Castiglione d'Otranto (LE), Slow Food Roma, Cooperativa Diaconia Frosinone. Co-produced by MAXXI - Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI secolo, Roma. Thanks to Giuseppe Pascucci - Antica Stamperia Pascucci, Gambettola (FC), Magda Facciani e Daniele Saviotti (produzione), Annalisa Gramigna e Luca Rigoni (ospitalità), Fabio Pennacchia e NoMade Roma.

