The strawberry in love

Once upon a time, there was a very small, shy Strawberry, who lived perched on a green comfortable leaf of her mother’s plant. Strawberry looked at the surrounding world with her round eyes, she loved the sun rays that sometimes shined on her, warming her and brightening up many corners of her little world. One day, the wind blew stronger than usual and some branches of a tree near her plant fell to the ground and through the empty gap Strawberry saw a fruit, which she had never seen before. He was little, oval, and a shiny yellow just like the sun. He moved slowly at the end of the branch where he was attached with some shiny, dark green leaves that danced around him. Strawberry thought that the fruit was the sun’s son and fell madly in love with him. From that moment Strawberry had eyes only for him and she spent her days with a stiff neck just to catch a glimpse of him. All plants and fruits realized that Strawberry was in love with Lemon and sometimes they made fun of her, Strawberry became even redder and redder and she covered her eyes with the leaves she had on her head. But time passed by and Strawberry didn’t manage to meet Lemon, so she became very sad. Then, a Yellow Apple made a decision. She called all the fruits in the garden with the exception of Strawberry and Lemon and said: “That’s enough, we can’t go on like this any longer! We have to help Strawberry! She is mad about Lemon, but if we don’t help them to meet or she
will wither without knowing him. You, Red Apple, who have been in fairy tales with princes and princesses, what is your advice? What can we do?” “Who knows! Usually, in fairy tales the king and queen organize a ball so that the two lovers can meet” “What a wonderful idea!” Grape said jumping up “I really like it! Let’s organize a ball!” “Yes, yes” chorused Bananas, Pears, Kiwis and all the other fruits. ”Hey, just a minute” Red Apple said “how can we invite Lemon? Who knows him? They said that he is always a little sour. I don’t want to go to invite him”. “I’ll do it” Orange said “you know, we belong to the same family of citrus fruits, we come from East and we are very close, we Oranges, our cousins are Mandarins and also Lemons. -However, it isn’t true that he is so sour! He is very good, you only have to know him better, he has got a lot of good qualities!” The preparations for the ball started. Mango undertook to play the Mambo and as an exotic fruit also other South American music. Grape decided to detach all grapes from the vine to make decorative green and violet balloons for the dancing floor. Pears decided to become contrabasses and the Wild Little Pears added “And
we are the guitars!”. So, everybody had something to do and there was a great confusion. Strawberry didn’t understand what was going on, she saw all her friends working and enjoying themselves together and she felt left out. The day of the ball finally arrived.

At the beginning of the ball Orange went to Strawberry and said: “Well, what are you doing, aren’t you ready?” “Ready for what?” answered Strawberry with wide eyes. “What? Don’t tell me that in all this confusion nobody has informed you! Tonight, we are having a ball so you can meet Lemon!”. Hearing these words Strawberry, nearly fainted and started to stutter: “What, what, me and Lemon, Lemon and I, it isn’t possible, I’m shy!” “What do you mean, you’re shy?” exclaimed Green Apple who had came to help Orange, who was always very realistic: “Excuse me, but aren’t you crazy about him? So, get to know him! How can your dream come true? And then, we’ll all be there to help you. Come on, hurry up!”. So Strawberry washed her face and shined the leaves on her head; Orange said: “Look, I'll lend you some perfume of my cousin Calabria Bergamot. I know that Lemon likes it a lot.” Strawberry was very excited and took to the dance floor dancing with a very serious Kiwi in his brown suit. The dance floor was very crowded, the Red Apples were dancing a passionate tango with some composed Mandarins; Currants, Blueberries and Litchis danced rock and roll, because round as they are, it was really easy for them. The Currants called
“Strawberry, Strawberry come to dance with us!”

“Strawberry didn’t need to be asked twice: she left the composed (and rather boring) Kiwi and went to dance a frenzied rock and roll. While she was jumping and dancing with a Litchi she lost her balance and to avoid falling over she clutched on to Lemon, who had come to the dance floor to see her! “Oh sorry, sorry!” Strawberry whispered redder than ever with her disheveled leaves. “Not at all!” Lemon answered with his eyes on her “Fortunately I was here, otherwise you would have had a nasty tumble.” “Oh, thank you very much” Strawberry mumbled even redder. Lemon plucked up courage and said in a breath “You know, I have always look at you when you were on your leaf on the ground, to tell the truth, I try to move the branch I’m on so I can look at you for longer, you are so beautiful and so small and red, I like you very much!” Strawberry was so excited and happy and embarrassed that she couldn’t breathe and she became redder and redder.

The other fruits realized that the ice was broken and played a very sweet waltzer. With a push Banana sent Strawberry in the Lemon’s arms and they started to dance with eyes for nobody else, each lost in the eyes of the other…. Three days after the ball, Lemon and Strawberry announced their marriage. The wedding ceremony was wonderful, all the fruits were present. At the moment of “I do” Red Apple and Orange shed some juicy tears and every one applauded
when Strawberry came out covered in Lemon juice with a veil of white sugar. Strawberries and Lemons became a very popular way for children and adults to eat fruit... they lived happily ever after.

A Formula-1 Pepper Pilot
Once upon a time, there was a Pepper and since he was small, still hidden by the leaves of the plant from which he grew, he dreamt of becoming a pilot and to participate in a Formula-1 race.

His brothers made fun of him, but he was determined and every time he saw a Courgette he tried to climb on it and to drive it along the furrows in the earth. Actually, the Courgettes weren’t very happy about this, but as vegetables are generally patient they kept him happy. In the meanwhile, Pepper grew and ripened, from green he became yellow and chubby and now it was difficult to climb onto a Courgette.

It goes without saying that the Courgettes were very happy about this, but Pepper became very sad because time was passing and his dream hadn’t become true.

All the other vegetables, apart from the Courgettes, the Aubergines, Tomatoes, Onions, Garlicks decided to give him a surprise and make a special racing track just like the Formula-1 track for their friend and to organize a race.

The Courgettes, Aubergines and Carrots decided to be the Formula-1 cars because of their long shape, while the Onions and Garlicks acted as protection barriers on the sides of the furrows to protect the many spectators who had come to watch.
Broccoli were the starting-blocks ready to wave Lettuce leaves to give the go-ahead to start the race. Pepper was extremely happy and from yellow he became red with excitement.

Finally, Broccoli gave the go-ahead and Pepper started at top speed on a long violet Aubergine, that glided very fast along the furrow in the earth. At the first curve Pepper was leading the race together with Tomato on Courgette and Spinach on Carrot.

But after just a few meters it was already clear who would win the race. Pepper drove Aubergine confidently, while Tomato slid off Courgette at the second curve and even though Radishes waved Chicory leaves to signal out the accident to the other pilots, Carrot driven by Spinach, trying to avoid Courgette who was in the middle of the track spun around on his self several times ending up on the Onions on the trackside. Pepper cut arrival ribbon happy and proud, he was red with excitement. The prize-giving ceremony was wonderful: the vegetables were a rainbow of colours and together shouted “Up with Pepper, Up with Pepper!”.

Celery, long and straight, proclaimed the winner and put a laurel crown Pepper’s. When he got down from the podium, Pepper was surrounded by a group of Parsley journalists, who asked him a lot of questions: “Are you happy to be the winner? How do you feel being the winner of such an important race? Who do you dedicate this victory to?”.
Pepper stunned by the noise, crowd and emotion, only had the strength to answer: “I dedicate this victory to all my vegetable friends that have worked so hard with me to give me this joy. I’m happy to be the winner of this race, but I’m even happier to have understood that I have got a lot of friends who have helped me to realized my dream”.
The Bread Family

Once upon a time, there was a big supermarket, which had a section dedicated to bread. Every day, baskets full of different shaped bread arrived at the Supermarket. The smell of freshly baked bread filled the air and made all the supermarket assistants’ mouth water. Although everyone could smell the bread, no one could hear that the different types of bread spoke to each other and lively discussed everything that happened in the supermarket. The Rolls were chatter-boxes. The Round Rolls fell over each other and teased the long bread because they couldn’t roll over. Milk Rolls sniveled continuously because they wanted their Mum, while Olive Oil Rolls, always a bit oily, complimented the other bread shapes, but, as soon as these moved away they would start speaking behind their backs. “Did you see how flat that roll was”? It looked as if it was hit by a tram”? And that really fat, fat one that can’t even move”? What a sight! It’ll be eaten in pieces by all the family, while modestly we are made only for one person, how elegant....” Among the many shapes there were also the French Baguettes, very long and very slim, they gave themselves airs because they considered themselves very chic and ready to participate in a fashion show. what elegance...!” One day, among all the different shapes, some new types of bread appeared.
They were darker than the others and they seemed to come from another world. Everyone began to whisper: “Who are they? Where do they come from? Who knows! They’re probably immigrants, they’re from the South, who knows what language they speak....” and so on.
Finally, a great loaf of bread, made with potatoes was considered the oldest and the wisest, went to the new arrivals and asked: “Where do you come from? Who are you? What are you made of?” The new arrivals answered all together: “What, don’t you know us? We are your Whole-wheat cousins! When they prepared us, we didn’t want to break away from our fibres or from our vitamins and now we are all together!” Hello, hello, it’s wonderful to meet all the family! The Milk Rolls, very white and soft widen their eyes and stopped whining in front of their new cousins, who were more compact and elastic. The baguettes realized that in comparison to the darker Whole-Wheat bread, who seemed to have a perfect tan, they weren’t so elegant any longer and so decided that the following day neither they would part with the flour fibres anymore. The Oil Rolls immediately tried to make fun of them: “Ha, ha, you’re our poor cousins, you’re made for people who don’t follow the fashion, who eat like old people....”. “What are you saying, old and poor? Sorry, but you don’t understand anything! If someone is out of fashion and old, it’s you, you smell stale the day after and as you are soft, you are eaten by people without teeth, who don’t have the strength to chew”! We, modestly, are stronger, richer in many good things and we are in fashion, that’s why we are eaten by sportive people and models who want to keep fit. And if you really want to know the truth,
tomorrow we will still be good and tasty to eat, while nobody will want to eat you!”. The Oil Rolls immediately said: “We don’t believe you, we don’t believe you! You will see that we will sell more than you today and tomorrow!”. And then they went off in a huff, grouped up and started to speak badly about their Whole-Wheat cousins. But when the supermarket opened and the first customers arrived, it was a surprise to see that the Whole-Wheat bread was immediately sold! The mothers who had previously bought Oil Rolls, seeing the Whole-Wheat rolls said: “Well! It was about time, we couldn’t stand these Oil Rolls anymore, they were no longer good in the evening. We prefer Whole-Wheat bread, it’s tastier for our children. In fact, instead of buy just one roll, I’ll buy two rolls, they will be just as good tomorrow”. The Oil Rolls tried to get to the front row to hide the Whole-Wheat bread, but the mothers quickly move them looking for the new arrivals, who leaving the basket made faces to their Oil cousins. At the end of the morning all the Whole-Wheat bread had been sold, while the Oil Rolls were nearly all still in the basket; they had became hard and a bit dry, no longer good to eat. Then, the owner of the supermarket said: “From tomorrow onwards I won’t buy Oil Rolls anymore, I’ll buy Whole-Wheat bread, so the children can eat a tastier roll”.

The Princess, the pearls and happiness

Once upon a time, there was a beautiful Princess, who lived in an Eastern Country.
The Princess loved pearls very much and she expected the fishermen to bring her all pearls they fished.
Therefore, the Princess had a lot of pearl necklaces and she loved to see them sparkle in the moon light.
The fame of her wealth spread to all neighboring populations.
Thus, a bad day, the realm of the Princess was invaded by an army of barbarians looking for her wealth.
The Princess immediately ran to the well to hide all her jewels, her milk white pearls, so the barbarians couldn’t steal them.
So, the barbarian army stole all things the population had to eat and destroyed all it couldn’t take away.
When the barbarians had left, the Princess went to fetch her pearls from the well, she adorned herself with them as if nothing had happened.
But as the days passed the people were hungry and couldn’t find anything to eat, and even the Princess started to feel strong pangs of hunger that she had never felt before.
She joined her people and saw the children crying of hunger and their mothers suffering seeing their children die.
So, the princess ran to her garden and in the moon light pulled the pearl necklaces from her neck, and crying shouted to the moon: “Oh Moon, moon how stupid I have been to think that pearls could give happiness! Oh, if the children could eat my pearls to live, these necklaces would really make me happy!”.

The moon heard the Princess, came down close to her and said: “My dear, finally you have realized what it’s really important! Now, you can change the destiny of your people! Bite each one of your pearls and plant them one by one in the soil tonight. Tomorrow, there will be a surprise for you and for your people”.

The Princess obeyed and spent all night biting and planting the pearls; at dawn, exhausted she fell asleep.

Later, she was woken by joyous children in a field full of strange plants, on their stem they had a row of pearls with her teeth marks on them.

The women joyfully picked these new plants. They cooked them and found that they were very good. Everyone laughed heartily for having escaped the danger, so they called it “rice”.

The Princess realized that only sharing your things with others brings you happiness.
Knobby potatoes and French Fries

Once upon a time, there was in the pantry of a house a heap of very small and knobby potatoes which were ashamed of their aspect. Actually, it hadn’t always been like this. When they were still under the soil in the field they were really happy. Worms, ants and all other little animals called them “the underground sun” as when the potatoes split a beautiful and delicate yellow similar to the sun came out, the potatoes were happy and split with great pleasure to bring a little happiness to their friends. When the potatoes saw French Fries for the first time they felt ashamed. French Fries looked down their nose at potatoes and piled up one upon the other said with a haughty, snobbish air and a French accent: “You’re really ugly! How horrendous you are! Do you really think that children will eat you? Poor dreamers you aren’t as beautiful and thin as us! For Heaven’s sake, get out of our sight! It would never do for someone to pass by and think we are relatives! We don’t want you even as distant relatives, or actually, we really don’t want to see you and we will say that we don’t even know you!” and so they turned around giving their backs to the potatoes and continued to giggle and to make some nasty and salty remarks on the potatoes’ aspect. While the potatoes got together and tried to hide in a corner, a milk bottle looked at them and said. Hey, Girls, do you really believe what those stupid French Fries said? Don’t you know that they are potatoes like you? The truth is that
“they” have been to a sort of beauty parlour where they have been cut all the same size, very, very thin and then fried and covered with salt. But believe me, you are much better than
them!", "Really??!!", chorused the knobby potatoes. "Of course", answered the milk, "I know what qualities you have very well, modestly, I'm an expert". "We know, we know" the potatoes said relieved, "we know that you are one of the best, most complete and tastiest foods". "That's right, so you should have trust what I say. You are more beautiful than those stupid French Fries made up with ketchup lipstick. If you are baked with your peel and served with a small spoon of butter that melts on you when you are still hot, you are delicious. And what I can say when you are boiled, peeled and sliced with tomatoes, celery, onions and olive oil that looks like sun rays? I admit that I prefer you mashed. When you're mashed I spill myself onto you with a nice lump my w butter nephew and we blend together in a romantic dance, you drive me crazy, we're so good together! And if you really want to know something? The only taste in French Fries is salt which makes you very thirsty, while you have many different tastes and qualities according to the way you are cooked. Also, in our world of food and nutrients, the most important thing isn't to be beautiful outside, but good inside and to have a lot of good qualities to share with children".
Bent the sleepy fish.

Once upon a time, there was a Fish family that lived happily in the deep, blue sea. Father Fish worked building corals and Mother Fish took care of the family. The three small fish of this nice family attended school, and after doing their homework, they spent their time swimming and playing hide and seek among the rocks, the algae and the sand beds of the blue sea.

Actually, the two older fish played most of the time, while the youngest, whose name was Bent, more than played slept here and there. Bent, in fact, swam for a couple of metres and as soon as he found a soft alga or a comfortable shell he put his two fins under his head and fell asleep. Sometimes, he also fell asleep on the way to school and arrived late in class. Bent was always more tired and he hardly play anymore, he also fell asleep while eating at dinner table with the rest of his family.

So Mother and Father Fish took him to the “Fish-Paediatrician” because they were very worried.

The “Fish-Paediatrician”, who was very good and loved Bent because he had known him since he was a newborn, examined him carefully. Suddenly, Bent fell asleep on the examination bed of the “Fish-Paediatrician”. At the end of the examination, the Fish-Paediatrician said to Bent’s parents: “My dears, your son is sick, but it isn’t serious.
Bent has lived in the dark depths of our sea for too long. He sees everything blue and so his mind thinks that it’s time to sleep because he doesn’t see the light and he falls asleep.”

So, Mother Fish said: “Doctor, is there a cure? Will he get better? What should we do?”

“Ah, the treatment is very simple” the Fish-Paediatrician answered,” you should let Bent go up the surface of the sea, to the sunlight and you will see that our little Bent will get better!”

Bent’s parents listened to the Fish-Paediatrician’s advice, because he had studied a lot and he was extremely professional and they relied on him a lot.

So, they moved to the highest part of the sea surface.

As they went up the water changed from dark blue to sky-blue and it became more and more transparent. While the family was going up towards the surface Bent, who was initially dragged by the fins by his father because he was fast asleep, woke up and started to swim alone.

At a certain point, the water reflected the sun rays and Bent started to move his tail and fins very quickly, he swam vertically towards the sea surface. While he went up he closed his eyes, because there was too much light and he wasn’t accustomed to it, but he liked the sensation of warm water on his fish scales.

Finally, he reached the surface, he pulled his mouth out of the water and opened his eyes. ….. Bent saw the sun and its
rays for the first time in his life and he was dumbfounded....

“It is wonderful!!!” He said.

Suddenly, Bent got over his continuous slumber and started to jump and to swim faster doing acrobatic twirls. He spun and twirled, he plunged in the water, he shook his tail right and left, well he didn’t keep still for more than a second!

Father and Mother Fish were very happy to see their little fish so active and agile.

However, some time after Bent became sad and silent. So, one day while he was alone with a sad look on his face his mum asked him why he was so sad. Bent answered “Mum I really like swimming and jumping in the sea under the sun-rays, but I would like it even more if I could swim in the sun. Do you think I can?”

“My dear son, if you want, you can try to jump higher and higher” Mother Fish said, proud of such a brave son.

Then, Bent started to swim faster doing longer and longer jumps towards the sun until he ended up in the fisherman’s net.

Bent didn’t realize what had happened and bounced on the boat. Bouncing and bouncing, he luckily fell back into the sea again.

Bent was very frightened and swam to his Mother.

“Mum, mum what a fright! I ended up on a boat and I was taken away!”
“Bent, my dear, you are a very good little fish, very brave and I’m very proud of you, but you should understand that each being in the world has its own characteristics.
You are a fish and your world is the sea. To live happily you
don’t need to reach the sun, it’s enough to understand and to
see the beautiful things around you”. So, Bent widen his eyes
and everything appeared more beautiful: the red corals, the
white shells, the golden sand, the green algae, all the
coloured fish, the water that changed colour from emerald
green to sky-blue and dark blue and the sun-rays gave
everything a golden reflection. Bent realized that his Mother
was right: he threw his little fins around his Mother’s neck,
he kissed her on the tip of the nose and said “Mum, I
understand now! From now on you don’t have to worry
anymore, I’m older and I understood how wonderful it is to
swim around in the sea and appreciate the world around
us!”.
The child who always said no

Once upon a time there was a boy called Paul who always wanted to the same things.

He always wanted to watch the same cartoons on television, to recite the same poem, to wear the same clothes and eat the same things.

His mother and his father kept saying, "Paul why don’t you try playing hide and seek with your friends instead of playing with cartoon puppets?" And Paul always replied, "No, I don’t like playing hide and seek! I don’t want to!"

"But if you've never played hide and seek! How can you say that you don’t like it?" his parents answered.

"I do not like it and that’s it! I said no!" Paul replied.

His parents tried suggesting other games, but Paul continued to say no to everything.

Paul had learned to recite a Christmas poem and didn’t want to learn any other. Soon it was Mother’s Day and Paul recited his Christmas poem. Surprised his aunt said "Didn’t your kindergarten teacher teach you a poem for Mother's Day"?

"Ugh! I didn’t like it so I didn’t want to learn it." He answered.

Everyday was a tragedy both at home and at the kindergarten. Paul’s mother and his teacher tried to convince him to taste new food, always getting the same
answer, "No, I said no! I do not like it!" “But if you've never tasted it, how can you say you do not like it?"
"I do not like it! I said no!"
And so, every day, Paul only ate biscuits at breakfast, only pasta with tomato sauce and bread with ham for lunch. In the afternoon he only wanted chocolate and for dinner sandwich with chips. His parents were desperate because they didn’t know how to convince him to change his behavior. Both Paul’s parents and teacher were worried for his health.

They all said: "How will he be able to grow up healthy and strong if he doesn’t eat fruit, vegetables, legumes, meat and fish? Our organism, and especially children’s bodies, need many substances found in different foods, but Paul doesn’t even want to try them."

Then, his teacher added, "Even when I propose to play at a new game with the other children Paul refuses to participate and says:" I do not like it! I said no!"

Paul’s Mum and Dad exclaimed "We need to think of something to overcome this obstacle for Paul sake".

If children often have a fairy who helps them, even parents and their teachers have their own fairies who suggest what to do and help them when they need it.

During the night the Parent’s Fairy and the teacher’s Fairy met on a cloud near the moon.

"We need to find a quick solution, this situation cannot go on any longer!" said Ewa, who was the Teacher’s Fairy and the Principal of the Fairy University in a faraway Country.
"You right, but it isn’t easy," answered Margaret, the Parent’s Fairy. "Look, we have a stubborn child who doesn’t want to learn new things, and, if I have to say the truth, we have two weak parents, who immediately give in to whatever their son wants."

"Ah, yes you’re quite right, but it’s for these kind of people that we Fairies are here, isn’t it? Otherwise what reason would we have to exists?" Added Ewa.

"Well let's get down to work! If we want Paul to change his behavior, we have to make him understand how wrong he is and make him desire all the things that he rejects. "

"You're right, as usual," sighed Margaret, "Did you notice that Paul always says the same sentence?

"No, I do not like it! I said no!" the two Fairies said in chorus.

"I've got an idea! Why don’t we cast a spell on him so he can only say these words? Then, perhaps, he might understand how wonderful life is, to learn new things, to vary without always saying, No!, "said Margaret.

Ewa agreed," Huh! I really like this idea! This way he’ll learn that you cannot always say NO in life." No sooner said than done, the two fairies slipped into Paul’s bedroom, he was sleeping so they decided to appear in his dream.

"Hello Paul, we’re Ewa and Margaret teachers’ and parents’ Fairies," they said together.
"And what do you want from me? I'm neither a parent, nor a teacher." Paul answered in his sleep. "Yes, we know that, but we're here to help your parents and your teacher who no longer know what to do to convince you to try new things, new games, and new food."

"Do not bother me! I'm fine as I am! I mean, I only eat and do the things that I like!"

"Are you sure?! In this way you are missing a lot of great games, good fun and delicious food..." the Fairies tried to convince him! But Paul, with angry eyes, yet again replied, "You're really annoying me! No, I do not like it! I said no."

"Well," said Fairies Ewa and Margaret, "we will fulfill your wish and as you never change games or food, from now on you won't be able to use different words from the ones you always use... What need is there for new words if you always use the same ones? - No, I do not like it! I said no! -"

With this, the fairies arm in arm, turned about and went back on the cloud near the moon.

Paolo saw them go away and repeated in his dream: "No, I do not like it! I said no!" and continued to sleep.

The following morning his mother woke him up saying: "Paul, wake up! It's time to go to the kindergarten! This morning there's the cartoon show you like so much."

Paul woke up saying: "No, I do not like it! I said no!"

"Why don't you do not want to go to the nursery?" his astonished Mother said, "Come here and eat your favorite
biscuits, then get dressed ...

"I don’t understand, you do not want to have breakfast and go to the kindergarten ... do you want to stay home?"

"No, I do not like it! I said no!", Paul continued to repeat, and seemed increasingly angry as he spoke... His mother couldn’t understand, but even if Paul wanted to say that he was hungry and wanted to go to kindergarten, he could only repeat that one sentence: "No, I do not like it! I said no! ".

The worried Mother, measured the temperature, but Paul was fine, then she called the doctor who came to visit him. The doctor said to his Mum, "I think there's nothing serious, but let's keep him in bed for a day today".

When doctors have nothing to say they usually suggest keeping children in bed, just to rest for a while...

Paul kept saying, "No, I do not like it! I said no!" and was increasingly angry because he could only say NO, even if he wanted to say YES. Say yes to lunch, say yes to go to the kindergarten.

It was already midday and Paul was really hungry and very bored, alone in bed... His Mother asked, "Paul are you hungry? I have prepared pasta with tomato sauce or would you like your ham sandwich?"

"Paul repeated once again:" No, I do not like it! I said no!"

Throughout the whole all day Paul went on saying the same two sentences, while the parents were going mad because
they couldn’t understand what was happening. Even his 
teacher went to see him in the afternoon, worried because he 
hadn’t gone to the kindergarten in the morning, but Paul 
kept on answering her questions with: "No, I do not like it! I 
said no!"

In short, Paul was getting even angrier than before, because 
he could not explain that he had become prisoner of his own 
NO with which he had always thought he could do whatever 
he wanted. He was starving and he hadn’t eaten all day 
because he kept on saying, "No, I do not like it! I said no!" He 
was also very bored because he continued to say, "No, I do 
not like it! I said no!" and, although he had tried all day to 
say Yes and use other words, all he could say was: "No, I do 
not like it! I said no!" Finally, he managed to fall asleep.

As soon as he fell asleep, the two Fairies came down from 
their usual cloud and went into his dream...

"Hello Paul, how are you?"

"Ah, it’s you two! Give me back immediately all the words 
that I know and need."

"No, sweetie, you don’t need them because you don’t know 
how to use them. So why should you have them back?" The 
two Fairies said.

"Of course I need them back!! I was hungry today, I wanted 
to eat and it’s your fault I’m still hungry because I kept 
saying NO. I wanted to have fun and see the cartoons, 
instead I was in bed all day, bored doing nothing. I wanted to
say so many things to Mum and Dad, I wanted to tell them about my dream, but all I could say was, "No, I do not like it! I said no! – I am very angry with you."

"Dear Paul," Ewa pointed out, "you were bored today because couldn't play with your favorite game, you didn't go to the kindergarten, or get what you wanted, you were ill because you did not get what your body really needed...food."

"Does this ring a bell?" Continued Margaret "It means that if you continue to say, - No, I do not like it! I said no! -, you will deprive your body of many things you need to grow and feel well. Then your body gets angry, just like you're angry now, and become ill. What do you want to do? Do you still want to continue to say No...or would you rather get to know and to try new things? Of course you might not like some of them, but you'll also find discover even more pleasant one."

Paul was shocked: he suddenly realized how silly he had been refusing to try new things, he blinked and said:

'Well, maybe you're right, I can try to say Yes and see what happens.'

"Good boy! You won't regret it ". They gave him a kiss on the cheek and, always arm in arm, as good friends, went back to their cloud.

The following morning Paul woke up and went straight to the kitchen. His mother asked: "Paul, do you want your usual biscuits?" "No," he replied, "Can I have a cup of milk, please?" His Mum nearly fainted out of joy, and immediately
prepared a cup of milk. Paul drank it in all in one go and said: "That was good." At kindergarten the teacher suggested: "Children, shall we play hide and seek or 1,2,3 star?" Paul got up quickly and said: "Let's do both!" During the game he was the one who ran, laughed and enjoyed most of the game. At lunch time Paul went to the dining table, he was a bit afraid of trying new foods, then he said to himself, "and what if I like them, as I liked my milk and the games? Let's see what happens, the color seem nice ..." The food was pasta with beans, followed by a bowl of green broccoli, green as a grass. Paul took a spoonful of pasta with beans and thought: "It's not bad... Let's have another spoon..." and then another spoon and ate it all. The broccoli looked like little trees, so Paul picked them up one by one with his hands and ate them trying to imagine a forest of broccoli. Paul, who had never wanted to try any kind of fruit, was curious to see a peeled orange and, slice after slice, ate it all, enjoying the flavor. Astonished the teacher asked: "Paul what’s happening to you?" "What's so strange? I was hungry and it was all very good!" He replied, “Can I compliment the chef?" The teacher gasped: "Yes, yes, but you’ve changed a lot in just a few days!!!...."

"Well, that’s life, dear Teacher, we grow and become wiser, I'm no longer a silly child who doesn’t want to try anything, now I'm a big boy and also very intelligent, who tries and
tastes everything ... "he said, looking rather proud of himself ... and already thinking about a new game to learn.
The two Fairies, sitting on their cloud, looked at each other and, always in chorus, said: "All is well, that ends well.".
Once upon a time, there were Water Drops, they were all identical, transparent and clear, running and jumping in a mountain stream. They were small Water Drops that had yet to learn a lot about life, the bigger and wiser Water Drops were always ready to teach them new things. The Water Drops ran and jumped and couldn’t wait to grow up and travel round the world. One Water Drop said to another "Imagine how nice it would be if we ended up in the sea, so big, so blue, always in motion, what fun it would be!" "No," said another Water Drop: "I hope to end up in the aqueduct. Think how nice it would be to travel through water pipes, visit lots of countries and different places and then we could be so useful... I would love to water gardens, so flowers could drink in the summer..." Yet, another bubbled "Yes, I want to go into the aqueduct too, and from there into a lovely water jug and then straight into a transparent glass to be drunk by a child or used for cooking." They all chattered and dreamed and dreamed while they continued to run and jump. The older Water Drops smiled remembering when they too were young dreamers. Running and jumping the Water Drops fell into a kind of large lake and still chattering away, they found themselves in a network of pipe lines similar to a motorway. They began to slide about inside the pipe lines ending up in transparent bottles. As soon as the bottles were filled up, a machine put a cap on them, so that the Water
Drops couldn’t escape. Some small Droplets were frightened because they could no longer move as before, but the older Water Drops said: "Do not be frightened! This is modern life! You will see a fantastic world beyond your imagination." Hearing this, the small Water Drops calmed down and began to chat among themselves. Later, a big man arrived, he picked up some bottles and put them in plastic raincoat.

“I would like to get out of here, go into a glass and have a stretch” complained a Water Drop. "Patience," answered one of the elder Water Drops "I think we're going to the supermarket first" "What’s a supermarket?" The young Water Drops asked in chorus. "You’ll see, you’ll see..." replied the elder Water Drop. The crates of water bottles along with many others were put onto lorries and, after a long journey, ended up in a supermarket. Some water bottles were placed on a shelf next to other bottles filled with colored liquid. The Water Drops in the bottles immediately began to look around and talk. "Where are we? What a strange place!" "It’s full of strange things " “What are those colored bottles?"

"Hey! It’s us! Can’t you recognize us?” Some Drops in the coloured bottles shouted. "No," answered a well known Water Drop with many friends.

Then guessing and wondering the Water Drop exclaimed "Don’t tell me that you’re Plin, you’re Blap, and you’re Blop!"
What happened to you? You aren’t transparent and clear anymore! Actually, you’re brown!!! What’s happened to you?”
"Don’t you dare say a word!! ! You’ve only been bottled, while we have been covered in sugar and now we are all very sticky... we who were so proud to be clean! They poured colours into us and then stuck a coloured label on us. Believe me, we were much happier before...." " You’re complaining!? -said the brown drops- What about us? Not only have we been covered in sugar, but they’ve also given us something that makes us hiccup and make bubbles. And as if that wasn’t enough they added a strange thing called caffeine to us and we can’t get a wink’s sleep anymore!"
"Oh, poor things!" Cried the Water Drops altogether. At that very moment a family walked towards the shelf. The Mother said: "We have to buy some bottles of water." The two children began to whine: "I want the brown bottle! I want the orange one!" The father replied: "But water is so much better! Why do you want this stuff?" "No, no, we don’t like water, we want sugary drinks!" Finally the parents gave in saying: "All right! We’ll buy you the sugary drinks, but don’t start complaining if you feel sick...".
The bottles went into the shopping trolley, and, then, into the fridge, once they got home. Half an hour later, the little girl opened the fridge, took out the orange bottle and herself poured a large glass. Soon after, her brother opened the brown bottle and quickly drank a glass full and then
another. While the children were drinking, their Grandfather walked into the kitchen, looked at them and asked: "How can you drink that stuff? Plain tap water is much better!" He took a jug, filled it with water and put it in the fridge.

As soon as the refrigerator door closed all the Water Drops began to talk. The Drops in the colored bottles began to say: "Hic! Finally! We couldn't be stand being closed up in here! Hic! We've got the hiccups, it's that strange stuff they've added! Hic! What a nuisance." The Drops in the water bottles were very sympathetic with all the problems their friends had! The Water Drops that had just arrive in the jug joined in the conversation. "Oh, poor things, how right you are." The Water Drops in the bottles said: "Hey, you're like us! Fresh, clear and transparent!"

"Yes, fortunately we ended up in the aqueduct pipes, we travelled without causing pollution, like you bottled in plastic and transported in lorries. We Droplets of tap water are used mainly for cooking and washing, but fortunately there are still intelligent people like the children’s Grandfather who still drinks us.”

“Lucky you! " Replied all the bottled Droplets in chorus.... and obviously with a final hic! (the colored ones).
It was dinner time, the Mother set the table and took the water jug, the bottles of water and the coloured sugary bottles out of the fridge. At dinner the children immediately began to drink the colored sugary drinks. "Children, I'm warning you! You are exaggerating with these drinks! Now eat the salad that your Mother has prepared for you, their Father admonished. "I'm not hungry," replied the boy "I'm not hungry, I have got a stomachache and toothache," cried the girl. "Ah, there we are," the Mother said, "we told you that these drinks would make you feel sick, but you are so stubborn and didn’t believed us."

"Mum, I didn’t think these drinks could really make us feel sick." "Well" the Mother said "all the sugar they are made with certainly gives you tummy ache, and how many times do I have to say that sugar is bad for your teeth? This is what happens when you don’t listen to your parents.”

The Grandfather said to the boy "Why aren’t you hungry?"

The Father answered: "He can’t be hungry, he’s almost drunk half of the bottle! With all that sugar he’s lost his appetite, but I'm curious to see what happens tonight..."

His Grandfather, Father and Mother drank water from the jug and bottle "Ah, tastes so good! Fresh and clear," the grandfather commented. Mum said "Excuse me, would you pour me some water from the jug? I want to see if it’s any different from the water in the bottle?" The Water Drops raced to fall into the glass and be drank...
After the first sip, the mother exclaimed: "But it is exactly the same as the water in the bottle!" “Naturally,” Grandpa said "plus, it hasn’t polluted anything, not being bottled in plastic or transported, and you don’t even have to pay for it!"
"Well, you know that you've almost convinced me to use only tap water?" Exclaimed the Mother. The Water Drops, needless to say, immediately began to dance rock and roll out of happiness...
"We'll see, we'll see" said the Father "but it's late and we should go to sleep. All to bed, come on!” The child tossed and turned around in bed, he couldn’t fall to sleep.
He was wide awake in the dark, he could hear all the furniture creak and was a bit scared... then he began to feel hungry, but he didn’t have the courage to go to the kitchen alone.

Suddenly, he saw the light of the hallway turn on and his grandfather pass by his door. He jumped up and joined his grandfather in the kitchen. "Grandpa what are you doing?" He asked. "Old people don’t sleep much, so I was reading a good book. I was thirsty, so I came to drink a glass of water. But what are you doing still awake at this hour?"

“I’m tired Grandpa, but I can’t get to sleep and now I am hungry, too!” "Well, child all that coloured drink you had at dinner time was full of sugar and caffeine. The sugar made your stomach think it wasn’t hungry, but it was a trick and not having eaten properly you’re hungry now, the caffeine keeps you awake and stops you from falling to sleep... Well, let’s fix the situation. Why don’t we eat a nice apple and have a drink of water from the jug”? "Yes, Grandpa, anything you say! I know I was a bit 'silly, and I don’t want to be a spoilt child."

"That’s alright, don’t worry, we all make mistakes, it’s just important to understand them and not repeat them. What does the water taste like? Do you like it?"

“Yes, Grandpa you are right, it’s refreshing and really good. It isn’t like the other drink, which makes you always more
thirsty... you know Grandpa, tomorrow I am going to tell Mum and I want to drink the tap water, too."
All the Water Drops in the jug did a somersault of joy and yelled "Give me five!!!!"
Matthias and Milk

Matthias really likes sleeping... especially on cold winter mornings, when it is so difficult to leave the warmth of his bed to go to school. Mum enters his bedroom punctually at 7 am to wake him, but Matthias wants to carry on sleeping, and hides even deeper under the bed-covers. The minutes tick by until Matthias finally gets up and reaches his mother in the kitchen only to hear: “Matthias, you are late as usual and you are going to miss the bus! You haven’t even had breakfast!”

“Do not worry mum, I will buy a sandwich at the baker’s near school before entering”, Matthias looked at the steaming cup of hot milk on the table that his mother had prepared, and, to tell the truth, he was quite hungry. Too late! He ran out of the house ignoring the grumbling and complaining voices inside his tummy. The first to complain are Matthias’s leg muscles, they do not have enough energy to run so fast.

His stomach feels called into question and defends itself by pointing out that it is completely empty, therefore it has no nutrients to send out. Even the brain, from high above, is very worried! “How can I stay active and concentrated without having received sugar for breakfast? Matthias has an important class test and I feel so tired and sleepy!”
Trying to console the intestine says: “Come on boss, try to hold on for a couple of hours. Matthias will have snack at mid-morning break” “True, let’s hope that is not the usual sandwich. I’m not interested in fats, I need sugar to work well. If Matt knew how hard I have to work to digested that piece of greasy sandwich!”, the brain complained to the intestine. Matthias’s bones join in on all the complaints, while he continues to run frantically towards the bus stop.

“Poor us, what shall we do? We needed that cup of milk! Matthias has to grow at his age, but how can we stretch out if we do not get Calcium? We are also asked to reinforced to bear Matthias’s weight which increases daily. It’ all the fault of all this bad habit of skipping breakfast and eating snacks rich in fat and calories at school!” If only Matthias knew what he unleashes within himself every time he decides to sleep a little longer... Similar thoughts were going on in Matthias’s mother’s head. “Matthias is always skipping breakfast, this is not good for him. Yesterday, he couldn’t button up a pair of jeans that I had bought a few weeks ago.” She thought while caressing Lorenzo’s head, Matthias’s younger brother, who was dipping a biscuit in his cup of milk. “I’ve got to wake up Matthias earlier in the morning rather than letting him skip breakfast and perhaps persuade him eat some cheese for dinner instead hamburgers”. Matthias’s mother decided realizing that Matthias wasn’t introducing enough calcium in his diet.
When a mother makes a decision for her child’s well being, she knows that, despite facing difficulties, she must reach her goal using firmness, perseverance and a bit of craftiness. Actually, that afternoon, Matthias’s mother was greatly helped by the events... “Mummy, Francis arrived in class today with one arm in plaster, so he cannot play the football game on Friday. How can we win? He is a real wonder!”

“I am so sorry for Francis, but who knows if he had had breakfast every day...” Matthias’s mother insinuated. “What has breakfast got to do with a broken bone?” Matthias asked curiously, leaving the snack he had just opened on the table.

“You know Matthias, our bones are made of a mineral called Calcium. For children its extremely important because it allows your bones to grow longer and become stronger.”

“Mummy, how do I eat this Calcium? I don’t want other children to grow while I don’t, and I love playing football too!”

“Above all you can find Calcium in milk and cheese.” His mother informed him.

“But I hate cheese, mum!”

“The cheese family is very big. There are soft cheeses and solid ones. There must be one you like among them. Each one has a flavour all of its own. Tonight I let you try a fresh cheese, that, spread on bread, is a real delight” immediately adding “How about a yogurt instead of that croissant?”
After dinner, Matthias’ mother managed to send him to bed earlier than usual, so it was not such a great effort for Matthias to wake up few minutes earlier the next day and enjoy a nice cup warm of milk for breakfast. It’s a pity that as he runs to the bus stop he cannot hear his bones shout. “FINALLY!!!!”
NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION FORMS

Nutritional information on Fruit

History

The fruit has always belonged to the diet of people from all continents. Several kinds of fruit are quoted in many sacred books of many religions and they are represented in sculptures and paintings discovered in some archaeological excavations in the five continents. Citrus fruits, peaches and prunes, native to East and in particular to India and China, were already widespread in Europe back in the time of the Ancient Greece. Many centuries after, Arabs spread the use of the cooked fruit, as marmalade and jam, mixed with meat as seasoning and added to honey for the nougats.

Properties

The fresh fruit is generally rich in water, fibre, simple sugars, above all fructose, potassium, vitamin A and vitamin C. Fructose, that is a simple sugar rapidly absorbed by our intestine, is an excellent source of immediately usable energy. Moreover, the fruit is rich in phytonutrient, which have protective function against cancer, ageing process, diabetes and microbe. Potassium is essential for the ability of cells to exchange the nutritive substances with the outside, for a perfect neuron synapses connection, and the hearth function. The red-yellow fruit as apricots, oranges, khakis, mango, melon, papaya, medlars, contains a higher quantity of vitamin A. Oranges, tangerines, strawberries, lemons, litchis, mandarins, pears, papaya, grapefruit, currant are very rich in vitamin C.
What it is good for

The fruit, together with vegetables, helps to prevent many kinds of tumours, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases among which above all hypertension, obesity, constipation, all diseases that are very frequent in the modern world because of an incorrect diet. The abundant content of water is useful to quench in the end of the meal and so to mix better the content of the stomach, but it is also useful, together with the fibre, to contribute to the feeling of satiety. Vitamin C, that is also present in vegetables, where it is partially lost because of the action of cooking, is one of the “busiest” vitamin in our body. In fact, it is essential for the formation of all tissues of our body: it is important as antioxidant, in collaboration with vitamin E, against the free radicals; it contributes to the formation of some neurotransmitter substances and it improves the absorption of the iron in our intestine.

What it is bad for

People allergic to some specific kind of fruit, such as strawberries, should not eat that kind of fruit, but they can eat all other kinds to give themselves a lot of health.

Myths and facts

The fruit distends and it should be eaten far from meals. False: the fruit doesn’t distend, but it satiates and it is useful to prevent to overeat foods too rich in calories. Moreover, when the fruit is eaten in the end of a meal, the presence of vitamin C allows to absorb better the iron of the meat and that of the other foods. The fruit juice replaces the fruit. False: the fruit juice can’t replace the fruit because it often contains added sugars, because there isn’t the fibre of the fruit that has a lot of positive effects, and in the end because the technology used to produce the fruit juice eliminates many antioxidants.
Good advices
The fruit is ideal for the snacks of children whether in summer or in winter. In summer it quenches and gives immediately available energy, especially in the mountains or by the sea; in winter because its richness in vitamin C helps the immune defenses against winter diseases as cold and flu. Its content of fructose, antioxidants, aromas and fragrances and vitamin C increases with the ripening, while it diminishes with the increase of time passed from the picking and the consumption and then the fruits of the season are better than the hothouse ones. If it is possible, fruits should be consumed soon after their picking from the tree or at least it’s better to eat the fruit produced locally, that doesn’t stand for a long time in storehouses or that flies from a far-off country, contributing considerably to the pollution.

Adequate Servings
The WHO advices to consume at least 3 servings of fruit a day. A serving of fruit corresponds to a medium-big fruit for the family of citrus fruits, apples, pears and so on and to about 150 gr. of little fruits as strawberries, apricots, blackberries, soft fruits, cherries and grapes. These servings apply themselves both to children and adults.
Nutritional information on vegetables

Properties
Vegetables are rich in water, they have a low energy contribution and they are the richest foods in mineral salts, above all sodium and potassium, that control the quantity of water in our body and help the arterial blood pressure and allow the activities of muscles. Some vegetables, as spinaches, green radicchio, chicory, turnips and artichokes are rich in iron, essential for the transport of oxygen through the red blood cells in all organs of our body. Red-yellow vegetables as carrots, tomatoes, peppers, pumpkins and dark green vegetables as spinaches, broccolis, chard and green radicchio are very rich in vitamin A. Vegetables and fruit are also rich in several antioxidants that fight many diseases as tumours and cardiovascular diseases. Thus, does not mean that you only need to eat fruit or vegetables but you need to consume both of them because they have different and specific antioxidant which have a benefic effects on health.

They are good for...
Vegetables help to treat many diseases, above all thanks to their content of fibres and antioxidants. The intake of fruit and vegetables reduces the risk to develop many tumours, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases and obesity. Since the fibre isn’t absorbed, the intake of vegetables increases and extends the feeling of satiety, but it reduces above all the absorption of cholesterol and so the risk of heart diseases. Vitamin A, of which vegetables are rich in, is essential for the growth of tissues
and for the functionality of immune system and above all for the visual ability: a vitamin A deficiency, in fact, reduces the adaptation ability to low intensity light and, in some cases, it may even cause blindness.

**They are bad for...**  
Vegetables don’t cause any negative effects on health.

**Myths and facts**  
Vegetables distend: False. Our intestine is no longer used to a diet rich in fibres and so, initially, it may react with a feeling of satiety and distension. This is due whether to the typical effect of the volume of vegetables, or to the fact that bacteria in the intestine digest a part of the fibre and produce some gases, but going on eating vegetables this feeling wears off. Vegetables make you lose weight: False. Neither vegetables, nor other foods “make you lose weight”. It’s true that vegetables don’t make you fat since they are foods with a low caloric content, they fill up and satiate for a long time, reducing the assumption of food rich in calories and so they protect you from obesity.

**Good advices**  
Heat and boiling damage a lot the richness of mineral salts and antioxidants of vegetables. The ideal thing will be to eat raw vegetables, when possible, or to cook them with a little water, or better to steam them, saving the most important nutrients of vegetables and giving them to our health. It isn’t true that vegetables should necessarily be eaten boiled; they can be also grilled, backed, au gratin or used in omelettes or with pasta, rice or potatoes to make them tastier and accepted by children.
Adequate servings
The WHO recommends to take at least three servings of vegetables a day since two years of age. Every day, we should remember to wait at table for our children and for ourselves at least two servings of vegetables to assure our body a good supply of vitamins, mineral salts, fibers and antioxidants. A serving of vegetables for children corresponds to 50 gr of salad, 80 gr. of raw and mixed vegetables, 100 gr. of cooked vegetables. Practically, a serving corresponds to a nice tomato, or to 2–3 carrots, or to two handfuls of salad, or to a little dish of boiled vegetables or a dish of minestrone. For adults a serving corresponds to 100 gr. of salad, 200 gr. of raw and mixed vegetables or to at least 200 gr. of cooked vegetable.
Nutritional information on bread

History
The history of bread reflexes the history of the human kind, because in all countries several types of bread of different origin exist, that are more or less risen, salty or enriched with ingredients as legumes, herbs and various seasonings. Egyptians had prepared bread since about 5,000 years b.C. and it was sacred to God Osiride. Until the second century b.C. bread had been kneaded with the feet. In the same period, there were in Rome the first public bakeries where bread was first produced and then sold. At that time, there were, and this division has remained also for many millennia, a more tasteful bread for the nobles made with white flour, and a less delicate one, produced with more cereals, herbs and with the addition of everything could be edible and useful to satiate the population.

Properties
Bread is rich in carbohydrates, about 50%, for the most part complex ones, coming from the cereals (wheat, barley, rye, etc.). Bread has a content of proteins a little lower than 10% and a limited content of fats (about 1%). The quantity of fibre depends on the type of flavor and it ranges from 2 to 6 gr %. The content of mineral salts and vitamins is higher in the integral bread.
It is good for...

Bread is good for everybody and for all, above all if it is integral because richer in fibre, mineral salts and vitamins than the white and more delicate one.

A roll with tomatoes and other vegetables and a slice of cheese or with some salad or other vegetables and some ham is a complete and healthy snack that, day by day, protects children, but also adults, from all above-mentioned diseases, from tumours to cardiovascular diseases. Another pleasant and healthy way to use bread, above all the roll, is to spread marmalade on it: this is a “marriage” that will represent an intake of an immediately usable energy, coming from the sugars of marmalade and from bread, that is more slowly absorbed.

It is perfect for children, who do some sport, but also, in the right quantity, for the snack of the afternoon while they are doing their homework.

It is bad for...

Bread doesn’t harm if you consume it in the right quantity.

Rolls with too many cold meats, cheeses and fatty sauces, or the daily use of seasoned and so fattier bread as olive oil or milk rolls can bring to a weight gain.

The very delicate bread is less healthy than the integral one.
Myths and facts

Crackers and bread-sticks are “lighter” than bread. False: they are “lighter” than bread because they contain less water and they “weight” less, but from a caloric point of view they are richer than bread, whether because they don’t contain any water, or because they contain added fats in the paste.
To lose weight it’s necessary to eliminate bread. False: right servings of bread don’t make you gain weight, but using bread to pick up the fatty seasoning from the dish increases the intake of fats and so it brings to a weight increase.

Adequate servings
A serving of bread for children and adults corresponds to about 50 gr. Children from 3 to 10 years may consume about 2 servings a day, while adults may reach even 4 servings.
Nutritional information on rice

Properties
Rice, pasta, barley, corn represent the cereals most commonly used for human nutrition. They have a good energetic value since they are mainly composed by starch (80%) and proteins with a medium biological value (10%) and they are a good source of vitamin B1 and B2. B-Group vitamins are important because they take part in the metabolism of carbohydrates, lipids and proteins, in the formation of the red blood cells and in the good function of the nervous system and, in particular, vitamin B2 is important for a good condition of skin and of mucosa. The content of these precious vitamins is higher in integral pasta. The quality of proteins is modest, it improves when cereals are accompanied by legumes, obtaining a dish with a high nutritional value thanks to the completion of the proteins of cereals with those of legumes.

It is good for...
Right servings of pasta, rice, barley and so on are recommended to everybody. The transformation of the starch in glucose, the only sugar that can be absorbed, is a process that requires time and so the slow absorption of the starch of rice, pasta etc... avoids dangerous and unexpected increase of glycemia. Moreover, the prolonged digestion keeps the feeling of hunger off and so the intake of food. The satiating power of cereals increases if integral cereals or cereals with vegetables are consumed.
It is bad for...
Excessive and too seasoned servings with elaborate sauces and cream and butter increase calories that can bring to weight increase.

Myths and facts
Rice causes constipation. False: rice can be eaten also in the case of diarrhoea and gastro-enteritis because the enzymes that digest it are the most resistant and they act also if the mucosa of the intestine is damaged by the disease. Pasta makes you gain weight. False: a right serving seasoned in a normal way don’t make you gain weight, but, it satiates for a long time avoiding to eat out of meal. The thing that can contribute to make you gain weight is a too abundant serving seasoned with too many fats.
Rice is lighter than pasta. False: the caloric power of rice is similar to that of pasta, the difference is that the starch of the rice is more easily digested.

Good advices
In a balanced diet carbohydrates should supply more than the half of the daily calories. For this reason, the WHO recommends to intake from 2 to 4 servings of cereals a day among pasta, rice or bread.

Adequate servings
For children from 3 to 6 years of age an adequate serving of rice or pasta or barley corresponds to about 50 gr., for children from 6 to 10 years to about 80 gr. and for adults to about 80-100 gr.
Nutritional information on potatoes

History
Potatoes were imported in Europe with the discovery of America, but initially they were used for the nutrition of the livestock and until XVI\textsuperscript{th} century in France their use as food for man had been forbidden because they thought even that potatoes caused leprosy. Potatoes instead saved the German population from the thirty-year famine of XVII\textsuperscript{th} century and they have remained since then a cornerstone of the German diet, so that on the occasion of the picking up of potatoes in Germany there is a public holiday.

Properties
Potatoes are rich in starch, potassium, copper and magnesium. Magnesium is important for the mineralization of bones. Copper is important for the formation of peptides (little proteins) that allow neurons (cerebral cells) to “speak to each other” and to send remote commands to the other organs. Copper is also important for the production of haemoglobin and for the growth of the skin, nails and hair. 100 gr. of potatoes provide about the same calories of 25 gr of bread, so potatoes can replace rice or bread as food rich in complex sugars, that is with a slow absorption, that satiate for a long time.

They are good for...
Potatoes are nutritious and easy to digest if they are boiled or roasted and seasoned with some extra-virgin, salt and various seasonings or mashed potato with some milk are very good to vary our usual diet.
They are bed for...
If potatoes are fried they absorbed a lot of oil and so they increase a lot their caloric power and the digestion time. A frequent use of fried industrial potatoes, because of their high content of salt, may develop a stronger habit to the salty taste.

Myths and facts
Packaged fried potatoes are similar to the home-made ones. False: in the packaged fried potatoes about a one-thirds of their weight is represented by fats since their very thin cut extends the fried surface and so the quantity of oil kept in potatoes. Moreover, the very high temperatures of cooking which are higher than the one used at home are able to modify the fatty acids in the oil. Therefore, they can became really dangerous for the health.

Good advices
Potatoes should be preserved in a dark and cool place so as they can’t sprout. If potatoes are sprouted it’s important to remove carefully the sprout that contains solanine, a substance that if it is taken in great quantity, it is very dangerous for the nerve system.

Adequate servings
An adequate serving of potatoes for children from 3 to 6 years is about 100-150 gr. from 6 to 10 years 200gr., for adults about 250 gr. Potatoes can be alternate to rice or bread or pasta.
Nutritional information on legumes

History of legumes

Legumes have been present in the human diet since several millenniums before the Christian Age. Broad beans have been cultivated in Asia and in South America since the VIIth millennium b.C. At the time of Ancient Rome a bread called “Lamentum” was made from the flour of broad beans. Broad beans were a so delicious dish that Trimalcione offered it during his banquets. Everybody remember that, in the Bible, for a tasty dish of lentils Esaù renounced to his rights of primogeniture...... but we don’t know which of the 90 different types of lentils were offered him. Peas, that were born maybe in Persia, spread soon in all Ancient Europe and were important for the monk scientist Mendel to give the basis to the science of genetics and of inheritability. Beans have a rich series of different species and they were always very appreciated by Romans and by the European nobles of 1500, so that Caterina dei Medici received them as present for her wedding with Henry II of France. A particular legume used above all in the East is soya, known since the XVth B.C. From soya it’s possible to obtain flours, cheeses, ice-creams and vegetable steaks.

Properties
Dry legumes are rich in proteins, about 20gr.%. The proteins of legumes are rich in an amino acid, that is essential for our organism called lysine, while they are very poor in cystine
and methionine, of which instead cereals and rice, pasta or bread are rich in. They are poor in lipids, except for chickpeas and soya, and their lipids are mono- and polysaccharides (see schedule on oils). Dry legumes are rich in sugars, about 45%, and fiber, from 10 to 15%. They are also rich in vitamin B1, B2 and in vitamin PP, also called niacin. Legumes are also rich in iron that, however, being linked to the phytic acid, is not so easily absorbed.

They are good for...

Legumes are good for everybody. Their richness in proteins make them a precious food for the growth, the repair of damaged tissues, the production of neurotransmitters, of digestive enzymes and proteins of the immune response. To obtain the highest nutritional advantage, legumes should be eaten with rice, pasta or bread, taking this way all essential amino acids for our organism. Their richness in fibre and carbohydrates favours a slow and homogeneous digestion suited for everybody. Their richness in fibre make them suited for those who suffer from high cholesterol, diabetes and constipation. Vitamin PP, also called niacin, helps the metabolism (transformation and use) of fatty acids and proteins and its deficiency causes a disease called “pellagra” characterized by dermatitis, diarrhoea and dementia. Iron in legumes is absorbed less than that of meat (5-10% that of legumes, maximum 25% that of meat), however it is useful to cover the need of iron, that is very important for everybody, but above all for children. A severe iron deficiency in the first years of life, in fact, irreparably damages the memory and the learning ability of children.

They are bad for...

Legumes aren’t bad for anybody. They can cause ”trouble” because of their content of two sugars: stachyose and arabinose, that aren’t absorbed by the intestinal bacteria causing a feeling of distention.
**Miths and facts**

Legumes are the meat of the poor people. True and False at the same time. It’s true that the quantity and the quality of the proteins of legumes, added to those of cereals can replace meat; it is false that they are a dish only for “poor people”. Legumes can be found in all the best and most expensive restaurants by now.

**Good advices**

To improve the bioavailability of iron in legumes it’s useful to soak legumes for 12 hours in water and baking soda: iron will part from phytic acid and will be more easily absorbed by our intestine. Adding some lemon juice, above all to cooked lentils and beans, or a side-dish as tomatoes increases the intake of vitamin C and so the absorption of iron. After a dish of cereals and legumes, a second course rich in proteins as meat, fish, cheese or cold meats is useless and even harmful since it would excessively increase the intake of proteins.

**Adequate servings**

A right serving of dry legumes for children from 2 to 6 years is about 30gr. accompanied by 40gr. of pasta or rice, or by 60gr. of bread; for children from 6 to 10 years it is about 40gr. accompanied by 50gr. of pasta or rice, or by 60gr. of bread. For adults it is about 50gr. accompanied by 70gr. of pasta or rice, or by 100 gr of bread.
Nutritional information on fish

History
The first news on fishing goes back to the Upper Palaeolithic (40,000-10,000 years ago) with graffiti that represent the fishing of salmon.

Properties
Fish is composed by 70-75% of water. Fish has a content of proteins of about 17–20 gr%, that are considered noble proteins because they are composed by all necessary amino acids for our organism. The fish have less connective tissue within the muscle fiber because in the water there is no gravity therefore the fish is tender compare to other animals meat. Fish is rich in two essential fatty acids, called omega-3 and omega-6, that are very important in the regulation of the immune response, of the inflammatory response, and for the good functioning of cells. Fish is also rich in selenium, a mineral that has strong antioxidant and anti-ageing properties.

It is good for...
Fish, for its content of omega-3 fatty acids, helps to prevent cardiovascular diseases and for its content of selenium it delays the phenomenon of the ageing of cells...

It is bad for...
The intake of fish doesn’t cause negative effects, only who is allergic to fish should avoid to eat it.
Myths and facts......
Fish increases the memory: False, fish is very important for a good health, but phosphorus doesn’t have any relation with memory. Frozen fish is less nutritious and more dangerous than the fresh fish: False, frozen fish has the same properties than the fresh fish and if the cold chain is respected it is also as much safe.

Good advices
Fish doesn’t need a long cooking and, since it doesn’t have any connective tissue, the proteins of the muscles are cooked also with a simple and rapid cooking. Adding some lemon, vinegar or white wine in the water during boiling reduces the loss of proteins during the cooking and so fish is tastier. A rapid cooking in a broth with tomatoes, water and various seasonings allows to unite tastiness and nutritious principles.

Adequate servings
An adequate serving of fish for children from 2 to 6 years is about 40-60gr, for children from 6 to10 years about 70- 90gr., while for adults about 100-150gr. In a varied diet it is recommended to eat fish 2-3 times a week.
Nutritional information on meat

History
In the glacial period, when it wasn’t possible to eat fruits and roots anymore, the man became carnivorous and ate every kind of animals he hunted even snakes, lizards and so on. This unbalanced, irregular and difficult diet for children and adults improved with the discovery of fire that made meat more digestive and the diet more regular since the cooking delayed meat deterioration. During the centuries, meat has gained a social meaning of strength and wealth; in particular the roast game was the symbol of the diet and the power of nobles, who could allow oneself the luxury of a lot of fire and of a person dedicated to cooking, while meat stews and boiled meat of little animals as hen, fox and mouse were typical of the population, since they could be left unattended near to a gentle fire, that had simultaneously the task to cook and to warm.

Properties
Meat is composed by about 75-80% of water; for the rest it is rich in noble or high biological value proteins, that are rich in amino acids that serve to our organism, including the essential proteins, because we can’t produce them and they should be taken from food. Meat is also rich in iron, useful for the production of the red blood cells, of neurotransmitters for the memory and of myoglobin, a protein that is in the muscles and that carries oxygen. Meat is rich in vitamin B₁₂ that takes part in the formation of the red blood cells and of some neurotransmitter, of zinc, important for the immune response and because it reduces the formation of free radicals, and then of selenium, an important antioxidant
since it prevents the development of tumours and it delays our ageing. Quantity and quality of lipids in the meat vary according to the kind of animal it belongs to.

**It is good for....**
Meat is important for its content of essential amino acids, indispensable for the growth and for the maintenance of a good health. It is good because its iron can be absorbed until about one-quarters and it also improves the absorption of iron that doesn’t come from meat.

**It is bad for...**
An excessive use of meat may increase the risk to develop an intestine tumour. If the intake of proteins is excessive also our kidneys may be damaged.

**Myths and facts**
Red meat (veal, beef, horse) is more nutritious than the white one (chicken, turkey, rabbit). False: the content of proteins is quite the same, it may be slightly different the content of fats, generally higher in red meat. White meat contains less cholesterol so they are healthier.
The most expensive and tender meat cuts as the sirloin are more nutritious. False: the tenderness of meat depends on the quantity of collagen tissue of the joint. Lesser is the quantity of collagen, higher is the tenderness of meat, but the content of proteins is similar among the different joints.
Good advices
To have a tasty boiled meat put the meat in seasoned boiling water, while
to have a tasty stock the meat should be put in cold water. Children until 6-7 years of age don’t have suited teeth to masticate meat so they often masticate it for long and then they spit it out; it’s possible to obviate this common habit using mince, as meatballs, meat loaves and hamburgers, that have the same nutritional characteristics of small slices of meat.

Adequate servings
A right serving of meat for children from 2 to 6 years of age is about 30-40 gr, for children from 6 to 10 years of age it is about 60-70gr, and for adults it is about 80-100gr. For everybody, in a complete and varied diet, meat should be eaten three times a week.
Nutritional information on Milk

History
Milk appears in the Bible as sign of richness and opulence “I’ll lead you in the land where milk and honey flow” (Esodo 3,8,17) and in the Ancient Greece it was always used in the banquets and served to the guests in token of welcome. Yoghurt represents the derivate of the action of Lactobacillus bulgaricus on lactose, the milk sugar, and partially also on the proteins of milk. It has a very ancient origins: it was used by Egyptians more than 7000 years ago, by Sumerians and by Indian peoples, where the hot humid climate makes difficult the use of fresh milk. The first historical document on cheese is a low relief dated 3.000 b.C. in a Sumerian temple, where some priests who are preparing cheese are sculpted. The first cheeses were prepared using as rennet the sap of fig leaves, after that the stomach of ruminants were used. However, cheeses, that are different because of the milk used and the way or preparation, have contributed a lot to the survival of man whether for their nutritional richness or for the simplicity of their preservation that allowed to consume them also during the time of famine and poverty.

Properties
Cow’s milk is rich in proteins with a high biological value and in lipids, but its most important nutrients is calcium. The richness in calcium makes it an important nutrient from childhood to the advanced age for an adequate mineralization of bones and teeth. Milk is also rich in vitamin A, that is important for a good vision functioning, for the growth of tissues and for the functionality of the immune system. Yoghurt has the same properties of milk.
Cheeses are a concentrate of milk nutrients that raise with the increasing of their ripening, that reduces a lot the content of water.

**They are good for...**

Cow’s milk is good for everybody: children, after the first year of age, for its content of calcium and proteins with a high biological value, that are essential for and adequate growth; women, who are pregnant or breast-feed since they should supply milk to their children; old people, whose bones start to lose calcium, that should be replaced. Finally, a good cup of milk in the morning at breakfast helps at school to memorize, to summarize and to calculate, since it supplies sugar, that is rapidly absorbed allowing the brain to “work”.

**They are bad for...**

There are people who after 3-4 years of age can’t digest anymore the milk sugar (lactose), that remains in the intestine and causes bellyache and diarrhoea. In this case, milk can securely be replaced by yoghurt or by milk without lactose. Cheeses aren’t rich only in calcium, but also in calories and fats and so they should be used with moderation in the daily diet, since an excessive use may bring to an increase in the cholesterol level in our blood.

**Myths and facts**

Milk is important only for children. False, it is important also for adults and for old people for its content of calcium. Some cheese at the end of the meal helps the digestion. False, cheese is for all practical purposes a second dish, rich in proteins and very rich in fats, with a quite long digestion time.
**Good advices**

Milk, rich in calcium, is an essential nutrient in the nutrition of children and so its consumption should be encouraged. Milk has a sweet taste and there is any need to add honey, sugar or sweet chocolate. For those people who don’t like the taste of milk it’s possible to add barley coffee and not chocolate that adds also fats, sugars and so calories. Also the snack of the afternoon can be based on milk, as yoghurt or a shake with fruit and milk. Since our usual diet is too rich in fats, the use of semi-skimmed milk to contain the intake of saturated fats is recommended.

**Adequate servings**

An adequate serving of milk corresponds to about 200gr., equal to a glass of water. Children should take at least 2 servings a day, while for adults the minimum corresponds to one serving. An adequate serving of cheese corresponds to 30 gr. for children from 2 to 6 years; to 40-60gr. for children from 6 to 10 years; to 50-70gr. for adults with bigger quantities for fresh cheese and smaller ones for ripe cheese. In a healthy diet cheese should be eaten about 2-3 times a week.
Nutritional information on oils

Properties

Oils are composed by about 100% of lipids and only butter contains about 10% of water. Each gram of fat produces 9 kilocalories and so oils are an important source of energy. If energy contribution is the same for all kinds of fats, health contribution is different according to the kind of fats that are present in oils. Olive oil is rich in oleic acid, a monounsaturated fatty acid, that is light- and hot-resistant and that reduces low-density lipoproteins (LDL) and helps high-density lipoproteins (HDL). Among seed oils the richest one in oleic acid is arachis oil. Sunflower oil, corn-oil and soya oil are the less rich oils in oleic acid but they are very rich in linolenic acid (also called ω6) and in linoleic acid (also called ω3). Also these fatty acids reduce low-density lipoproteins, but they don’t have any effect on high-density lipoproteins.

ω3 and ω6 fatty acids are easily damaged by the heat; they are called essential because they can’t be produced by our organism and they play an important role in the immune defence, in the blood clotting, in the predisposition/protection to allergies and so on. Palm-oil and above all coconut oil even if they are vegetal fats, they are much richer than butter in saturated fats and in particular in saturated fats that increase the level of low-density lipoproteins bringing to the development of cardiovascular diseases. Olive oil is rich in vitamin A and vitamin E; butter is rich above all in vitamin A; seed oils are only rich in vitamin E that helps to protect the oxidations of ω3 and ω6 fatty acids.

They are good for...

A daily use of olive oil is very important, for its content of oleic acid, that prevents dislipidemies and cardiovascular diseases, and for the presence of vitamin E and polyphenols, substances with strong antioxidant properties against free radicals.
They are bad for...
Every oils and fats if used in great quantities can bring to a weight increase up to obesity. The use of saturated fats predisposes to atherosclerosis, hearth diseases and hypercholesterolemia. An excessive intake of $\omega_3$ and $\omega_6$ may produce alteration of the immune response, increase of the bleeding rate and, paradoxically, the risk of cardiovascular diseases.

Myths and facts
Seed oil is “lighter” than olive oil. **False:** the content of calories of seed oil is the same of olive oil = 9 kcal/gr
Frying with seed oil is better than frying with olive oil. **False:** $\omega_3$ and $\omega_6$ fatty acids, of which seed oils are rich in, are easily damaged by high temperatures, while the oleic acid of olive oil remains more stable also at high temperatures and so frying with olive oil is better. Among seed oils the most suited one to fry is arachis oil.

Good advices
Olive oil is one of main protection factors in the Mediterranean diet and its moderate daily use brings only positive factors to our organism. If, for economic reasons, it’s necessary to use seed oils less expensive than olive oil it’s recommended the use the richest oil in oleic acid and that is packaged in cans and not in transparent bottles because in the first ones $\omega_3$ and $\omega_6$ acids are protected from light, that damages its positive properties. Oil has its so-called “smoke point” that is the highest temperature that can be reached without damaging the quality of oil. If the temperature of the smoke point is reached and exceeded, fat molecules break and form toxic products also from those positive components that are present in that specific oil. For this reason, oils with a high smoke point are recommended to fry. Fats are not only the “visible” ones, as seasoning fats, but there are also the “invisible” ones, that are hidden in some foods as eggs, milk, cheeses, dried fruit etc....Many fats are added in the industrial preparation of snack foods, sweet and salty, where
their percentage can also reach 50%. In packaged fried potatoes, for example, the percentage of calories brought by fat can also reach 50%. Moreover, potatoes assume a composition in fatty acids that is similar to that of the oil used to fry them, that is seldom olive oil. In packaged sweet products, above all in those with simple cream or chocolate the percentage goes in some cases from 40% to over 60%. Reading on the label the expression “vegetal fats” isn’t neither exhaustive nor reassuring: palm oil and coconut oil, low cost and industrial oils, are very rich in saturated fats. It’s really prudent to buy only products where the oil used is specified and, in doubt, it’s better to make a simple homemade ring with olive oil or arachis oil, flour, eggs, marmalade, a once of time and a lot of love ...... or if wish to fry potatoes at home is recommended to always use olive oil.

Adequate servings
Because of the high caloric power of fats (more than twice that of proteins and carbohydrates) it’s recommended to not exceed the daily weight. A serving of fats is equal to 10 g. of olive oil and it corresponds to about a level tablespoon. For children the number of daily servings is about 2 and for adults 3-4.
Fusion or smoke point = it is the temperature at which oil starts to burn and fats to break down forming toxic compounds. Higher is the fusion point, fewer are the toxic compounds that form during frying.
Nutritional information on drinks

History
The most ancient drinks, besides water, are wine and beer. The legend tells that the properties of coffee were discovered by a priest in Middle East, who noticed that if goats ate some berries they became more lively than usual, so he ate the berries too and he hasn’t been sleepy anymore....Lemonade, as lemon juice and sweetened with honey, was used and spread by Arabs, who spread the use of spicy waters in Europe. Drinks with the most recent history are those with cola. Cola tree grows in Africa and its fruit has the same size of a chestnut, from a dark red to a white cream colour. Africans used to chew these fruits, very rich in caffeine, to avoid to feel effort and hunger and to have the illusion of a better taste, sweeter than the water drunk soon after. In 1886 an American industrialist added to the extract of cola nuts also the extract of coca leaves, a common shrub in Perù and Bolivia, publicizing the drink as a tonic for the mind, starting the production of the well-known drink...

Properties
Properties are certainly very different among the various drinks. A common properties among the alcoholic drinks, if they are produced at industrial level, is a constant and abundant presence of sugar, from about 8 to 12 gr. in 100 gr. of drink equal to about 64 - 96 Kcal a glass. Wine and beer are alcoholic drinks and alcohol, or ethanol, is a toxic substance that can be metabolized only by the liver. In children the metabolic pathways for the metabolization of alcohol aren’t developed so even small quantities are dangerous. Tea, coffee and drinks with cola are rich in caffeine and/or theine, substances with a strong stimulant power on the brain. Fruit juices may be more or less rich in sugar deriving from fruit and/or added in the preparation.
They are good for...
Fruit juices may be useful during summertime to satisfy at the same time both hunger and thirst in conditions of fatigue and loss of liquids as for example a foot-ball match on the beach. You shouldn’t forget that a glass of fruit juice corresponds to about 20gr. of sugar equal to about 80 kilocalories.

They are bad for...
The use of wine and beer is decidedly inadvisable in paediatric age, children in fact haven’t developed the route that metabolizes alcohol and they easily can reach the alcoholic poisoning with hypoglycemia and convulsion. Coffee, tea and drinks with cola are rich in caffeine and can cause insomnia and anxiety. All drinks, bottled tea, orangeade, fruit juices and so on are rich in sugar and, if used every day and in abundance, they increase the intake of calories and so they can favour the development of obesity and caries. In general, a glass of these substances contains 20-25 gr. of sugar resulting in 80-100 chilocalories. Orthophosphoric acid, often used in industrial drinks as acidifier and preservative, can bring to a slow loss of calcium in bones, if its use is frequent. Finally, the intake of sugared drinks, increasing glycaemia, blocks the feeling of hunger and so it can limit the intake of food richer in protective substances.

Myths and facts
Sparkling drinks help digestion. False, sparkling drinks are acid and rich in sugar, but these two properties don’t have any action on digestion.

Good advices
Often, children don’t eat fruit because they don’t like its taste, but, at the same time, they drink with pleasure the corresponding fruit juice. A little trick to accustom them again to the natural taste of fruit is to replace greater and greater percentages of fruit juice with some shake of the
same fruit until its total replacement. In the afternoon a good shake of mixed fruit and milk is an excellent snack.

Often, children ask and claim some coffee in the milk at breakfast because they are stimulated by their wish to imitate their parents (the power of the example!). It could be a great idea to prepare for them some barley coffee to add to milk, conciliating their wish to be grown-up and the protection of their health.

If the child in the afternoon has drunk a can of coke and at 11:00 p.m. he is still awake as a cricket you don’t have to wonder: he has drunk about 40mg of caffeine, as the minimum quantity of a common cup of coffee.

Adequate servings
It doesn’t exist a minimum daily serving of sweetened and/or sparkling drinks. There is instead a maximum limit of wisdom that shouldn’t be overcome, that is to limit their use in occasional moments, avoiding that the child can consider them moments of prize or feast.
Nutritional information on chocolate

Some history...
Since 3,000 years ago peoples from South America have already known and eaten chocolate, but the Aztecs gave cacao its maximum prestige using even its seeds as money. Cacao was added to different substances for example to hot pepper according to the purpose: drinks for guests of a certain standing, food or drinks for religious rites. Maybe, some Spanish sisters added it to sugar for the first time, giving birth to the ancestor of the modern bars and chocolates. The first industrial factory of chocolate was born in Switzerland in 1819.

Properties
Cacao is a vegetal product of very significant richness in nutrients and 100 gr. of chocolate give more or less between 500 to 550 kilocalories according to the kind: dark chocolate, milk chocolate or chocolate with hazelnuts or other ingredients. Chocolate supplies about 7gr. of proteins, about 50gr. of sugars, and about 34% of fats. The fats of first quality chocolate derive from cacao butter. The fatty acids of cacao butter are for two-thirds saturated fats and for about one-third monounsaturated ones. More than the half of saturated fats is represented by stearic acid that, in the organism, is easily transformed in oleic acid. According to the percentage of cacao butter the qualities of chocolate are different: 18% of cacao butter = normal chocolate, 26% = high quality dark chocolate; 28% = extra dark chocolate. Chocolate contains a substance called teobromine, that can improve the humor and gives a light euphoria, a small quantity of caffeine and it is rich in copper and manganese. Chocolate is rich in tyramine that stimulates the release of histamine, a substance present in our organism, that in subject people can cause itch, erythema, and headache.
It is good for...
Chocolate is good for those people who need to intake large quantities of calories in little volume and, in fact, it is used by climbers. Chocolate can be used as supplement of calories during diseases that make children not willing to eat. Eating a little (I say “a little”) dark chocolate “make you fill better” for its content of endorphins (substances that “mollycoddle” our brain and make us feel better and happier).

It is bad for...
Obviously, eating continually and too much chocolate may make you gain weight and it may also produce anxiety and agitation for the presence of caffeine and teobromine.

Myths and facts
Chocolate causes spots: False, fortunately chocolate doesn’t have this unwholesome power. Chocolate is rich in cholesterol: False, chocolate doesn’t contain cholesterol since its base, cacao, is the fruit of a plant and so a vegetal product meanwhile the cholesterol is found in substance of animal origins. Milk chocolate may have a small quantity of cholesterol coming from the milk it contains.

Good advices
In the choice of chocolate it’s important to choose the one that shows on the label the quantity of cacao butter, and obviously, to buy that with the higher percentage. Beware of chocolate in which vegetal fats (often coconut oil and palm oil) are listed in ingredients and not the cacao butter, the fat that is naturally present in chocolate.

Adequate servings
Unfortunately, it doesn’t exist a “minimum” serving of chocolate to eat daily or weekly. Of course, a chocolate a day or thereabouts has never harmed anybody, but a continuous use of low quality chocolate doesn’t improve the health of children (and neither that of adults). The advertised chocolate richer in milk than in cacao can’t replace the quantity of milk that is important for children, because the
quantity of milk in these products is very limited, while they are too rich in sugars and fats. Since the beginning, try to educate the taste of children in a positive way and to buy high quality chocolate and not that in which cacao butter is replaced by vegetal fats, in this way health and greediness will be combined.
Nutritional information on cooking and seasonings

**History**
Cooking and seasonings come about the need to make foods tastier and to adapt them to the nutritional needs of man. The local environment influenced a of the use of aromas and various herbs to make more digestible the most common foods, as also the different types of cooking. For example, in the countries of Northern Europe, rich in wood and with a cold climate, has developed a lot the roast, while in China, where the climate is humid and the supply of fuel was limited, they used dry excrements that gave an intense and short flame, ideal to fry. In Japan, where earthquakes have always been very frequent and so the fire is dangerous for consequent fires, has developed the use of raw and marinated food, that is so far a base of Japanese cooking.

**Properties**
Roasting increases the digestibility of proteins of meat and fish and decreases whether the weight or the volume of food because proteins, coagulating with the heat, lose water, while an excessive cooking causes a strong desiccation that prolongs the time of digestion. Baking is ideal for the cooking of bread, flatbreads and cakes since the starch, at high temperatures, changes in littler molecules called dextrins, that are more digestible and that develop the typical smell of these products. Boiling is used for meat and fish, but also for pasta and vegetables. With the boiling, pasta, rice and other cereal gains weight because starch grains and proteins “fill themselves” with water, while vegetables lose weight because they release
their content of water. Vegetables should be steamed or cooked when they are still dripping with water without adding some more water since the most abundant it is, the longer the cooking is, and the more mineral salts and vitamins they lose. Frying is the only type of cooking in which the mean of cooking increases the caloric content of food, while the entity and the type of alterations of food and oil depend on the oil used to fry (see form n 10 on oils). If some foreign substances as breadcrumbs, batter or pieces of food remain in the oil, toxic effects form quickly. The loss of vitamins in fried vegetables is lower than that of boiled ones which is faster. Microwave baking is more recent and healthier, because it doesn’t require fats and it doesn’t cause any loss of nutrients. The microwave oven is perfect to heat up food that has been already prepared in order to prevent an additional loss of nutrients. The properties of the sauces depend on their ingredients. A fresh tomato sauce with extra–virgin olive oil, garlic and onion is rich in antioxidants, while béchamel sauce or mayonnaise are very rich in calories coming from largely saturated fats. The vegetable broth is rich in mineral salts coming from vegetables, while the beef stock keeps the “taste”, but not the nutritive principles of meat.

Health risks
If fry-up and seasonings very rich in fats as cream, béchamel sauce or mayonnaise are used very often, they favour the weight gain and they can negatively influence the level and the quantity of fats in our blood.

Myths and facts.
The stock in which the beef is cooked and meat juice are very nutritious. False, the protein content of beef stock is only 2-3% compared with 18-20% of meat, and with meat juice that reaches only 4-5%. Undercooked bread is less digestible. True, the complete cooking of the starch makes it easier to digest, but overcooked bread with a too thick crust is just as difficult to digest.
**Good advices**
Boil vegetables in the right quantity, since preserving them in the fridge and then heating them up reduces a lot their content of vitamin C. The cream to thicken the sauce can be replaced by a spoonful of flour added at the end of cooking and rapidly added to the sauce.

**Adequate servings**
There isn’t a recommended weekly sequence of cooking methods, but the use of fry-up and a multiple cooking, as browning and brazing, should be limited to twice a month. Also the sauces too rich in fats should be eaten with parsimony.
Form on nutritional education

Often, children refuse to eat or even to taste foods that are instead rich in important nutrients for their growth, while on the contrary they continually gorge themselves on foods they prefer, but that are nutritionally unbalanced because they are too rich in salt, sugar, fats and so on. The problem of the “no” to some foods starts towards the end of two years of age when the child’s “wars of independence” start against the adults and in particular against the person who looks after him/her and in which the child identifies and who is generally his/her mother. The “no” of the child is a trial of strength and power, his/her and of the people around him/her. If the parents don’t accept the “no“ of their child regarding dangers or other familiar rules, the “no” regarding food is often accepted soon and the refused food is replaced by an other more pleasant one, causing a repetitive diet poor in important nutrients. On the contrary, children should be educated to a correct and healthy diet, that however is as much tasty and pleasant, using adequate educational techniques. Unfortunately, the most common techniques used in family are often inadequate and sometime dangerous. One of the most frequent behaviour is that to reward the child with a pleasant food after he/she has eaten a less pleasant one, or the blackmail of the promise to buy a toy against the intake of larger servings of food with respect to those desired by the child. The result is an increased preference for the food-reward and an increased refusal for the “imposed” one, or the refusal in eating without a reward. After rewarding a child with a food, generally sweet as chocolate, the intake of an other food less sweet as carrots, brings to what in English is known as “overjustification”, that is the child will wonder:” While have I been rewarded for this behavior? If I have been rewarded it means that what I have done is not so pleasant as I was told.” An other common technique, used above all in rigid families, is that to force to child to intake an unpleasant food, that is often of high nutritional quality and to prohibit the intake of an
other pleasant food, with a low nutritional quality. The momentary success wrongly reinforces in parents the concept that, their behaviour is the only effective one. The long term result of this technique is that the child wishes and appreciates even more the forbidden food, while for the imposed one there is an additional reduction of acceptability. In conclusion, both these techniques, very used in families, obtain at long term exactly the opposite effect to the desired one. Which are the techniques that are effective in reducing the refusal of food in children? The example, as in all aspects of life, is very important in the nutritional education. In fact, it has been demonstrated that observing the mother eating a specific food can increase the curiosity and so the taste of that food in children from 2 to 4 years of age, more than the observation of the same thing in an unknown person. The presentation of a food in a positive context and so in a happy, friendly and jovial environment increases its preference and consumption; the effects of a positive context don't limit themselves only to the presented food, but they expand to other foods that the child perceives similar to the food in question. For example, if a pineapple is presented to child in a positive context, not only the preference for the pineapple, but also the preference for all other kinds of fruit will increase. Of course, the presentation in a negative environment will have the same effect of “setting the cat among the pigeons” for every kind of food. Example and positive context can be given only if the foods refused by children continue to be present in family life. The initial refusal of a new food can be transformed in acceptance through repeated and frequent approaches. The most effective approach to increase the liking is that one where not only the child sees the unpleasant food, but that one where the taste of the food in question is included. The offer should take place when the child is “hungry” and not when he/she has only a feeling of faintness, but when the child is really very hungry and more inclined to try positively new tastes and less pleasant foods.
The most effective method to increase the liking and so the acceptance of a food is to continue with the offer and so the contact of the child with the food, without forcing him/her. At least ten, fifteen contacts with a certain unpleasant food are useful to start to obtain a satisfactory degree of familiarity and so of acceptability. Going on offering a certain variety of food, without constraint, but with resolution and always in a positive social environment, giving the example, is the best way to introduce a correct education to food. The nutritional habits can be intelligently modified, where and how it is necessary. Parents and teachers share the responsibility, but also the honour, to give health to children.
Concluding form on the nutritional pyramid

We often ask the nutrition experts the following question “What is the most important food to be fine?” The answer is given by a set of questions “Is there a letter of the alphabet that is more important than the others? Is there an instrument of the orchestra that is more important than the others?” Every element of a set is important for a perfect sum. So, every element is important in the context of a healthy and tasty nutrition. Foods, and in particular vegetable foods as fruit, vegetables and legumes don’t provide only proteins, fats, sugars, vitamins, mineral salts and fibres but they also are rich in many other different substances generally called “antioxidants”. These substances have the important task to protect our organism from the ageing and degeneration of the cells that can lead to the development of tumours, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. It’s clear that, with all this complexity of tasks, it’s impossible that a single food can be absolutely complete of every nutrient that our organism needs, above all that of children. Therefore, the best way to ensure the intake of every nutrients we need is to vary the selected foods and combine them in the most appropriate way. The adults, who put into practice this habit helping the children to develop it correctly, will have a good balance from a strictly nutritional point of view and also a knowledge of many different tastes, avoiding a monotonous diet and satisfying more their palate. Moreover, a varied diet allows the intake of a wide variety of tastes and every necessary nutrients and it also avoids an excessive intake of toxic substances naturally present or added to the foods through their transformation. How can we put into practice all this set of advices? The so-called “Nutritional Pyramid” puts into practice these advices. The foods with the same richness in particular nutrients are gathered in a group and all groups form a pyramid. On the basis, there are the groups of foods that are taken with a high frequency and many times a day, while in the higher levels to the top there are those groups of foods that should
be taken in less quantity and with less frequency during the week. The eight main groups are:
♦ Group 1 Cereals and similar foods. The foods belonging to this group are very rich in carbohydrates, for the most part composed by starch, rather rich in proteins and fibres and quite poor in fats. These foods are: bread, pasta and rice, potatoes, barley, etc...
It is advisable to take 4-6 servings a day of the foods of this group.
♦ Group 2 Fresh meat, pork salted meat of any kind, fish and eggs. The foods of this group are very rich in proteins, iron, and vitamin B and poor in carbohydrates and fibres.
It is advisable to take about 8 servings a week divided in 3 servings a week of fish, 3 servings a week of fresh meat, 1 serving a week of pork salted meat of any kind and 1 serving a week of eggs.
♦ Group 3 Dry legumes. The foods of this group are rich in proteins (very similar to the meat group in terms of quantity), carbohydrates, fibres, iron, calcium and vitamin B and poor in fats.
The quality level of the proteins is middle, but it improves a lot in combination with those of cereals. It is advisable to take 2-3 servings of legumes a week.
♦ Group 4 Vegetables. The foods of this group are very rich in water, fibres, vitamin A and C, and antioxidants and poor in proteins, lipids and carbohydrates. It is advisable to take at least two servings a day of different foods.
♦ Group 5 Fruit. The foods of this group are rich in water, fibres, rapidly absorbed sugar, vitamin A and C and antioxidants and poor in proteins and lipids.
It is advisable to take at least three servings a day of fruit.
♦ Group 6 Milk and cheeses. The foods of this group are rich in proteins with a high biological value, largely saturated fats and above all calcium and phosphorus. Milk and cheeses don’t contain fibres and cheeses are poor in carbohydrates. It is advisable to take at least a serving a day of milk and 2-3 servings a week of cheese.
♦ Group 7 Fats and oils as seasoning. The foods of this group are rich in fats, both vegetable and animal ones, exclusively rich in lipids. Animal fats are richer in vitamin A and vegetable fats are richer in vitamin E and the content of essential fatty acids is higher in vegetable fats. It is advisable to take maximum 3 servings a day.

♦ Group 8 Cakes and sugar. This “mixed” group is composed by foods that should only occasionally be present in our diet. These foods should not be excluded from child’s diet, but they should not be part of the daily diet. The last “secret” to eat good (where “good” means tasty, savour and healthy) is to vary also within each group of foods. It’s more dangerous a child eating more but always the same foods than a child eating a little but many different foods. As mums and teachers insist on children studying a little of all subjects, also the quite boring and unpleasant ones, to have a good learning it’s important than they also insist on children eating a little of all to be fine and healthy now and in their adulthood.

Enjoy your meal and have a good health!