

Grains, legumes, vegetables, eggs and cheeses were the base of the diet, with fruit and honey for sweetness. Meat (mostly pork), and fish were used sparingly, and as the empire expanded beginning in the 3rd Century BC, Romans welcomed new flavours – be it pepper from India or lemons from Persia.

Garum, similar to an Asian fish sauce, was liberally used to add a rich **umami** flavour to Roman dishes. All this was enjoyed with **honeyed** wine at dinners called convivium – gatherings to celebrate life and the seasons.

GARUM: a fermented fish sauce

UMAMI (noun) [U]: pleasant savoury taste

HONEYED (Adj.): tasting like honey

Magnanimi **embodies** this spirit of celebration, whether telling stories to guests or stirring up something delicious in his kitchen. Now 54, he laughs telling me how as a younger man he had a hard time convincing his father that customers would like his revivals of ancient dishes.

EMBODY (verb): to represent an idea or a quality

"I started working in the Hostaria when I was 14 and took a break to have my 'Jack Kerouac' years in the USA," he said. "When I came back, I had a new appreciation for the great history of Rome, and I was **hungry** to learn more about it."

Magnanimi's inspiration grew when a friend gave him "Dinner with Lucullo", a book full of stories and recipes from the days of ancient Rome. Its title character was a 1st-Century BC military man who was so famous for his **banquets** that Romans still praise a good dinner by saying, "that was a meal worthy of Lucullo."

Banquet /'bæŋkwɪt/ (noun): a large impressive meal

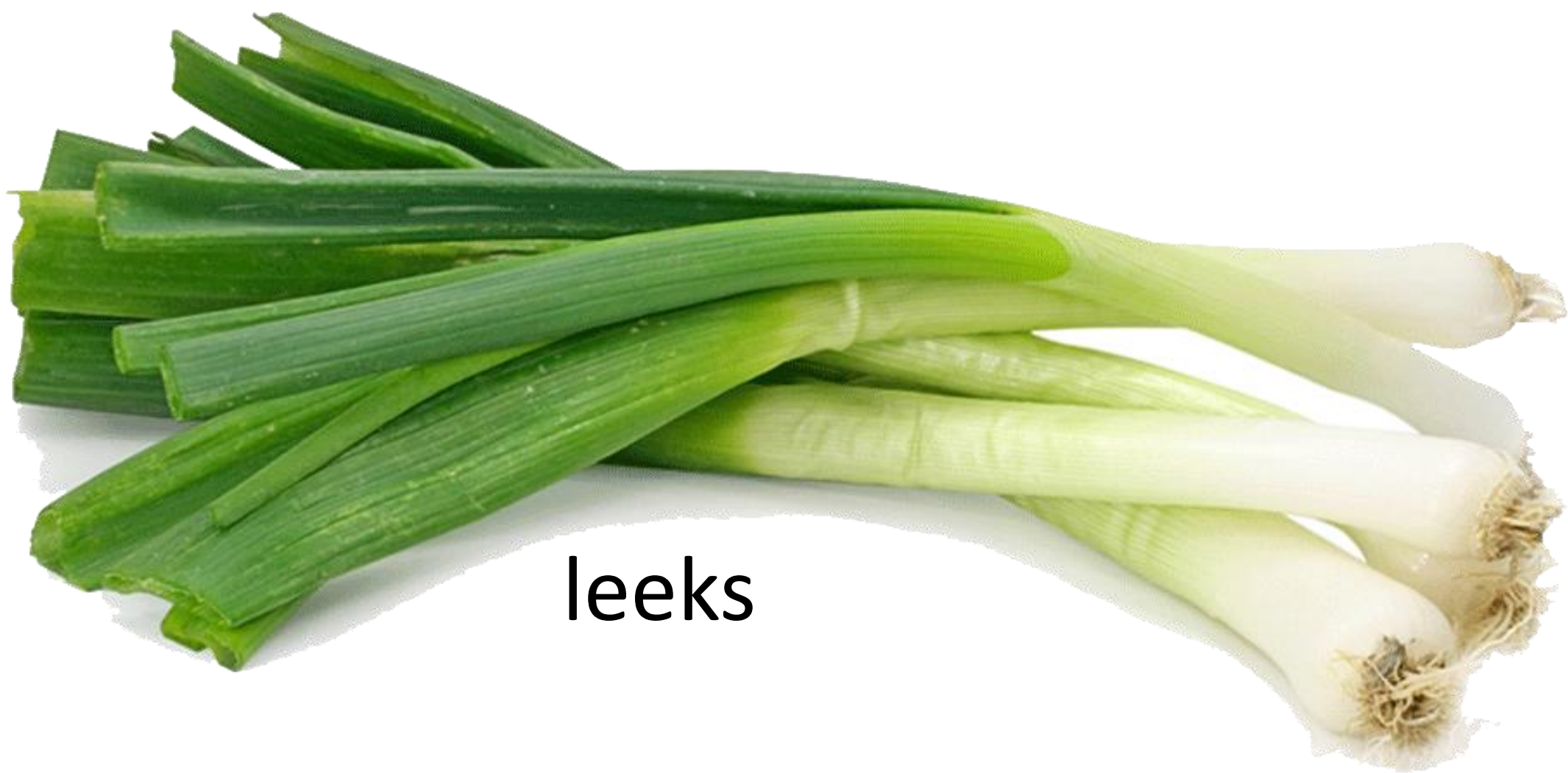
Magnanimiti started testing recipes and had his first success with pullum oxizomum, a chicken **entrée**. It is made with leeks and colatura di alici di Cetara, a condiment from the Amalfi Coast made from fermented **anchovies** that is the perfect substitute for garum. Some Japanese **diners** especially enjoyed it, and that led to him being featured on documentaries in Japan.

Entrée /'ɒntreɪ/ (from French) (noun): the main dish of the meal or a dish served before the main course

Condiment: a sauce that is used to give flavour to food.

Anchovy: a small fish with a strong salty flavour

Diner /'daɪnə/ (noun): a person eating a meal, especially in a restaurant



leeks

"My Roman **groupies** came after that; they were harder to convince to try something new," Magnanimi said. "And then pollo oxizomum was praised in The New York Times, so it is still one of our most popular dishes."

These days, the Hostaria's menu features the Eternal City standards (such as pasta amatriciana and carbonara), along with the ancient Roman dishes that have brought Magnanimi international attention and made his **once-sceptical** father proud.

Sceptical /'skɛptɪk(ə)l/ **adjective**: not easily convinced; having doubts or reservations.

"The public were deeply sceptical about some of the proposals."

I first met Magnanimi in 2008 when I **landed** in the Hostaria and, **on the recommendation of a foodie friend**, ordered patina cotidiana, a tomato-less **predecessor** to lasagne. The original recipe used lagana, a flat bread, which was layered with meats, fish and cheeses. Magnanimi's was simpler, filled with ground pork, fennel and pecorino cheese.

Predecessor /'pri:disɛsə/noun: a thing that has been followed or replaced by another.

"the chapel was built in 1864 on the site of its predecessor"